











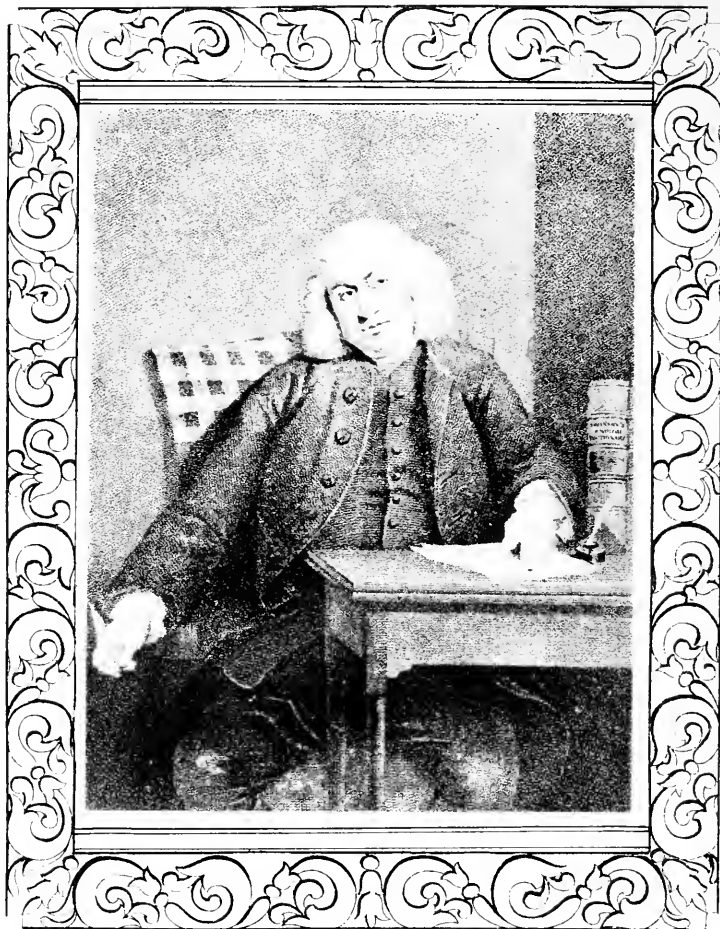
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BOSWELL'S LIFE OF JOHNSON







*Samuel Johnson*

BOSWELL'S  
LIFE OF JOHNSON

EDITED BY  
AUGUSTINE BIRRELL

AND ILLUSTRATED WITH PORTRAITS

SELECTED BY  
ERNEST RADFORD

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VOLUME I



WESTMINSTER  
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THE LIFE OF  
SAMUEL JOHNSON, LL.D.

COMPREHENDING AN ACCOUNT OF HIS STUDIES  
AND WORKS, IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER; A  
SERIES OF HIS EPISTOLARY CORRESPONDENCE,  
CONVERSATIONS WITH MANY EMINENT PERSONS,  
AND ORIGINAL PIECES OF HIS COMPOSITION:  
THE WHOLE EXHIBITING A VIEW OF LITERATURE  
AND LITERARY MEN IN GREAT BRITAIN, FOR NEAR  
HALF A CENTURY DURING WHICH HE FLOURISHED  
BY JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

WITH MALONE'S NOTES AND ILLUSTRATIONS

Quo fit ut omnis  
Votiva pateat veluti descripta tabella  
*Vita senis.* HORAT.

ell.

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Holmes



## P R E F A C E

THE writer of the latest account of the life-work of Sir Joshua Reynolds, in order to define at the start the purpose and scope of his undertaking, has said that Reynolds was Boswelled by Leslie and Taylor in their work on his *Life and Times*, and this may be taken to mean that nothing possessing the charm of their volumes can be placed in our hands again. The first President of the Royal Academy was the central figure of a very large circle indeed, and there proved when he died to be material for volumes appealing not to painters alone and their lovers, but to generations of men, his successors, whose numbers cannot be computed. There is no thought in my mind, however, of comparing the authors of Reynolds's life with Boswell. That they had little of Boswell's gift is quite clear; but the exceptionally interesting story of a very full life is told in the most

natural possible manner, and their work should be read wherever there is any desire to know more than we had from Boswell of the persons we meet in his volumes. It has been pleasantly said of the pig—in death he is so much divided that a singularly mixed entertainment is offered; and this in a way is as true of the prospect opened to readers when the tale of a life is told. There is no more telling device for a book-plate than old Dibdin's—'book openeth book,' each overlapping the other, and the reading of Boswell will certainly lead to much more.

But enough for the present purpose will be Forster's *Life of Goldsmith* and Reynolds's *Life and Times*. The latter was opened with no such expectation of pleasure as was almost immediately found, nor of finding what was most wanted, the justification in many cases of this selection of portraits. Making Reynolds, not Johnson, his hero, the reader will turn to these volumes to find the artist on much more intimate terms than the Doctor with some of the friends he meets there.

The fact that the Literary Club originated in a painter's suggestion seems to explain its catholicity. Said Sir William Jones of this

body : ‘ There is no branch of human knowledge on which some of our members are not capable of giving information ’ ; and scanning the lists of their names we feel that he spoke very truly :— Johnson, Burke, Garrick, Gibbon, Goldsmith, Sheridan, and others as great in their day :—

‘ O rare assemblage ! rich amount of mind !  
Collective light of intellect refin’d !  
Caught by the chemic mania raging round,  
The votaries of the crucible abound,  
Who, cold to wit and beauty, bend their cares  
To earths and acids, alkalis and airs ! ’

Irrespective of person, the Club possessed in its members more of what in a particular sense one may be allowed to call Quality, than has been discovered in any similar association. Its characteristic ‘ catholicity ’ was also the note of the President’s art, for whatever presented itself in human guise was regarded as grist to his mill, and even within the narrower circle of his own more intimate friends—their ladies included, of course—was a singularly varied assembly,—some ugly as Gibbon and Boswell, some lovely as Polly Kennedy. ‘ Sir Joshua is fat and well,’ says Miss Burney. ‘ He is preparing for the exhibition a new “ Death of Dido ” ; portraits of the three beautiful Lady Waldegraves ; a *Thais*,

for which a *Miss Emily*, a celebrated courtesan, sat, . . . and what others I know not, but his room and gallery are both crowded.'

It may be gathered from this that there are paintings by Reynolds enough to form a complete gallery, containing of beauty and talent the most remarkable collection of portraits that has ever been claimed by one man as his own; but my present concern is with those of the inner circle, and with an audience supposed to be wanting to know what opportunities are offered of seeing either the pictures themselves, or copies sufficiently good to be treasured.

One studies the subject to learn that Reynolds in practice had restlessly empirical habits, and the consequence is that not a few of his paintings have lost a great deal of their original quality, whilst others of course have been spoiled by repeated attempts to restore them; and since this is the fact it follows that the copies of the engravers are always increasing in value. It would be true of a poorer set for this reason; but the engravings we actually have are simply marvels of art, and the public is kept well informed of the prices the rarest command. There are prints being sold while I write—Sir Joshua Reynolds's portrait of the Duchess of Rutland,

engraved by Valentine Green, 1000 guineas, and others at 'famine prices'; Mrs. Sheridan as 'St. Cecilia' by Dickinson, 240 guineas, etc. Peculiarly English since its introduction to England has been the art of the mezzotint engraver, and the works of such men as those above named, with others whose numbers are great, made Reynolds feel sure of the life beyond death that is promised. A longer paper than this has been devoted to this one subject alone, but no more shall be said of it here than his biographers tell us. 'It is worth noting,' they say, 'that engraving has never flourished in this country as at that time, when the engraver reaped the chief gains of his work, and not the painter or publisher. He *gave* his pictures to the engraver, and was always beset by applicants.'

They were the happiest who made their collections then, for the following, though not an exact copy, is like what we commonly find on prints of the period :—

'Publisht as the Act directs, at the Blew Pidgins, Gt. Queen St.; 3s.'

The Johnsonian of whom I pretend to know most is an imaginary creature, knowing so little

of art that there must be a considerable tract of uncultivated land on his intellectual estate; and now that his hero's life is about to be illustrated with portraits, it may seem that the time has arrived for learning a little at least.

There is probably no book so well indexed as Dr. Birkbeck Hill's famous edition of Boswell, but there are other editions from which a pretty full list may be made of those whose portraits we want; and the next step, having made that, is to compare the said list with another containing the names of the men who gave sittings to Reynolds.

'As when a painter poring on a face  
Divinely through all hindrance finds the man  
Behind it, and so paints him that his face,  
The shape and colour of a mind and life,  
Lives for his children.'

There were hindrances enough in all conscience, as in Boswell's peculiar case; but some such a painter was Reynolds, upholding some such a standard, and it can hardly be said too emphatically that the friends of his choice were most fortunate in having a really great painter amongst them. There were representatives, as has been said, of almost every possible calling, and none but the foremost in each. *Eclectic*



is the word here—as true as in the Art School.

Including those that were painted but never engraved, it would have been almost, if not quite, possible to illustrate these six volumes with portraits by Reynolds alone.

Painted, but never engraved, were portraits by Reynolds of Johnson's earliest love Molly Aston, or Ashton, and copies would have been published if it had been found to be possible. Either in jest or in earnest the Immortal was always in love, and there was probably more of reality in these early affairs than in others of which we are told ; but as much may be said of us all, and one doesn't want everything changed.

'Of Dr. Beattie I should have thought much, but that his lady puts him out of my head—a most lovely woman,' said Johnson, writing to Boswell. Are there portraits of Mrs. Beattie, I wonder ; or of Mr. Tom Davies's wife ? 'Lead us not into temptation,' said the doctor, as if to himself, and the husband enjoyed it immensely. The authors of Reynolds's *Life* are naturally tempted to institute a comparison between their hero and Johnson, and claim for the painter immunity from attacks to which Johnson was somewhat morbidly subject. But this amounts

to no more than that Reynolds's case was exceptional, whereas Johnson's would have been normal if Nature had treated him fairly. We must make some allowance here, as in every similar case, and having done that it will seem that his feelings and experiences were so nearly the same as our own that nothing need be explained. Let there be talk as much as you please, but none intended to hurt.

There is no mention of any very serious affair with the wearers of the blue stockings, and if their portraits are shown, it is because of the laurels they won in the field that is open to all.

'Lo! e'en the fair with learned fury fraught !  
On beauty's brow affect the frown of thought ;  
Clorinda with electric ardour glows,  
And frights with full-charg'd battery her beaux ;  
While Cupid trembling, flies th' infected ground  
Scar'd at the philosophic scowl around !'

This style of writing died hard. (The author, Sir Martin Shee.)

While the talk is of ladies, there enters a Mrs. Emmet. 'In love with an actress here,' he said, and he heaved a sigh, recalling a seizure of passion which laid hold of him forty years earlier. But Mrs. Emmet,

according to Garrick, wasn't worth as much as a thought, and Johnson was blind as a bat.

A more serious *affaire*, however it affected the lady, must have been that which inclined his heart towards Mrs. Careless, the sister of Edmund Hector whose name occurs early and often, and one cannot help wanting to know a little bit more of the matter. Amongst the notes which have gone to the making of this selection, these two, as they stand alone, are the saddest. (*Mrs. Emmet*—no portrait; *Mrs. Careless*—no portrait.) The references to these ladies are separated by only two pages in the third volume, and lead one to suspect that some account had reached Lichfield of Samuel's behaviour in London. They make mountains of molehills in little Cathedral towns.

There remains Mrs. Thrale, who was but twenty-five years of age when the doctor was introduced, and sufficiently pleased with herself to be rather a dangerous plaything (a portrait by Reynolds exists showing her with her daughter 'Queenie'); and finally, Frances Reynolds, his junior by twenty years. The portrait we have by Reynolds having been

painted in 1759, she would have been about thirty years old at the time. The letters she had from Johnson were shown in a weak moment to Boswell, and amongst the world's wonders is this, that he did not get hold of them. 'There are letters which I have seen,' he says, 'and am sorry her too nice delicacy will not permit them to be published.'

There was nothing too nice about Boswell, nor in his ways of gaining his ends. The author of the coolest and sanest account of the man that has ever been published has presented the facts of his life in such wise that there remains not the slightest doubt in our minds that he was more than a little cracked. Some of the queerest of human beings are doing God's work in their way. There are immortals amongst the damned to whom Dante has introduced us, and others of later date; and seeing in him as we do the model and prototype of a still more contemptible creature, it seems that one cannot speak as if of his work alone, or as if he were really dead.

There are caricatures unnumbered of Boswell, and the only artist inclined to take him at all seriously seems to have been his friend Reynolds. For 'simple beauty and naught else' has any one

ever had anything that could be compared with this letter?

TO SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS.

MY DEAR SIR,—The debts which I contracted in my father's lifetime will not be cleared off by me for some years.

I therefore think it unconscientious to indulge myself in any expensive article of elegant luxury.

But in the meantime you may die, or I may die; and I should regret very much that there should not be at Auchinleck my portrait painted by Sir Joshua Reynolds, with whom I have the felicity of living in social intimacy.

I have a proposal to make to you. I am for certain to be called to the English bar next February. Will you now do my picture? and the price shall be paid out of the first fees which I receive as a barrister in Westminster Hall. Or if that fund should fail, it shall be paid at any rate five years hence by myself or my representatives.

If you are pleased to approve of this proposal, your signifying your concurrence underneath upon two duplicates, one of which shall be kept by each of us, will be a sufficient voucher of the obligation.—I ever am, with very sincere regards, my dear Sir, your faithful and affectionate, humble servant,

JAMES BOSWELL.

There is a way into every hole, and he got what

he wanted, of course, though 'he never earned money enough to pay for the portrait he had ordered on the strength of fees that never came.'

The really delicious story which Mauritius Lowe told of the wiles which Boswell employed to get from him what Johnson had written has been unearthed and retold with much of the gem-setter's art by the Literary Editor of our edition, and should be coupled with this by the reader who desires, like Bottom of Cobweb, a somewhat better acquaintance with Boswell. Mr. Keith Leask's volume, forming one of the 'Famous Scots' series, is the book of books on the subject; but one thing he said, and that perhaps inadvertently, which cannot be allowed to pass, and should have been challenged before, for even of Johnson he says, that 'he and most members of that club, apart from the record of Boswell, would be but names to the literary antiquary, and by the mass of the people entirely forgotten.' *Si monumentum quæris, circumspice.* There is no record of any club containing so high a percentage of members of whom this can be said to-day.

Though it may not have been easy, the forensic habit, or whatever it is, enabled Mr. Leask to

suppress the visible signs of his mirth; and the consequence is that his book of its class and kind is one of the very best.

. . . . .

In the space which remains are my notes on particular portraits, which would have seemed out of place in the lists.

Vol. I., to face p. 15.

*Portrait of Lucy Porter.*—It seems that this and that of her mother can be proved to have belonged to Johnson. The references in this work to Mr. Thomas Pennant, author of *London*, etc., are sufficiently numerous to have suggested the insertion of his portrait here, but the space is required by others. To a descendant of his we owe the information that they belonged in the first place to Johnson, then to his step-daughter, and then to the said Thomas Pennant, in whose family they have remained, and what has been said of these two applies also to this portrait of Garrick.

*David Garrick*, p. 60.—In commemoration of the ovation at Stratford-on-Avon, which was Garrick's rather than Shakespeare's. (B. Van der Gucht *pinx.*)

*Paul Whitehead*, p. 92.—Member of ‘a profane and riotous Club.’ One of the so-called Monks of the Hell-fire Club—headquarters, Medmenham Abbey; author of *Manners*, a satire.

*Anna Williams*, p. 187.—The matron of this Institution (The Ladies’ Charity School) has charge of the Minutes, which have been kept from the date of its foundation in 1702. Among its chief benefactors are the great City Companies, and conspicuous among the entries are the names of Mrs. Thrale, Anna Williams, and Johnson. What of money she had was left to this school, and, whether by bequest or transmission, some of Johnson’s properties followed—the teaspoons which had been hers, and two engraved portraits of Johnson; also a chair, suggesting his bulk; his writing-desk, and a great ottoman.

There is mention in Leslie and Taylor’s *Reynolds* of an engraved portrait of Anna Williams from a painting by Frances Reynolds, but that print I can’t find, and our reproduction is from the portrait they have in the school.

*Lord Chesterfield*.—Introduced to the Lords the ‘New Style’ of reckoning bill (24 Geo. II.,



ch. xxiii.), and left a legacy of misery to the biographers.

The ghost of him paces the churchyard, erasing the dates  
on the stones,

The emblems of Death protesting ; the skull surmounting  
the bones.

Do I stand on my head or my heels? of Doubt shall I  
ever be rid?

If Samuel was born when he was, he couldn't have died  
when he did.

(v. Chesterfield's *Letters*, Nos. 224, 247.)

## Vol. II.

*Dr. Charles Burney*, p. 4.—We reproduce several of Dance's drawings, and can tell from their dates the age of the sitters. The funniest is that of James Boswell, perhaps, but he has ceded his place in this book to Walpole.

*Francis Barber*, p. 23.—Painted by Reynolds, but not shown as a portrait, and on an engraving of recent date he is simply described as a Negro. The reproduction we publish is from a copy of the original by Henry Edridge, A.R.A. (1769-1821).

## Vol. III.

i. *Favourite Sitters*.—' In Sir Joshua Reynolds's

studio, classes and opinions cross each other oddly. The Archbishops of York and Canterbury take the chair just vacated by Kitty Fisher or Nelly O'Brien, and Mrs. Abington makes her curtsy to the painter as the Chief Justice bows himself in. . . . He painted her *con amore*, and always brought a large muster of the Club to her benefits. . . . The Saltram portrait of her, as Miss Prue with her thumb at her lips, is a masterpiece. . . .'

ii. '*Dinner Engagements*.—(July 17, at six) with Miss Nelly O'Brien, in Pall Mall, next door this side the Star and Garter.' . . . 'A constant visitor to Reynolds's painting-room during this year, as well as Kitty Fisher, her rival.'

(From Leslie and Taylor's *Reynolds*.)

*Dr. Thomas Campbell*.—It can only be said of this portrait that it is probably rightly described. There is a space for the name in our copy which somebody's hand has supplied. (Solomon Williams *pinx.*; Jas. Parker *sc.*) The said Solomon Williams was a 'foundation member' of the Royal Hibernian Academy, and therefore a compatriot and contemporary of Mr. Campbell. The matter has been discussed with some others, and the opinion is held that we have here a

print from a private plate, or that it was done for a book, and not used. [Before we invented photography, it was not unusual to resort to this means of obtaining copies of portraits, and in the circle surrounding a clergyman, especially one so well known, they would very likely be wanted.]

Vol. v.

*Vestris*.—‘Why should not Dr. Johnson add to his other powers a little corporeal agility?’ (vol. v. p. 218).

Lord Charlemont gravely asked Johnson if there was truth in the rumour that he was taking lessons of the younger *Vestris*?

The point of the joke is more evident to those who have read that the most famous of dancers and his son were at that time the rage in London. The House of Commons was empty on the night of the father’s benefit, and Horace Walpole has this in his letters:—‘Christmas Day 1780.—I shall not attempt to see *Vestris* till the weather is milder, though it is the universal voice that he is the only perfect being that has dropped from the clouds within the memory of man or woman. When the Parliament meets he is to be thanked by the Speaker.’

Gaetano Apolline Baldassare Vestris (1729-1808—*Le Dieu de la danse*) had two sons; Marie and Auguste. The latter, hardly less famous than his father, was with him in England, and he it is, I suppose, who is here represented (v. inf.). ‘*Si Auguste ne craignait pas d’humilier ses camarades, il resterait toujours en l’air!*’ so said the proud father. His son Amand, Ballet-Master, King’s Theatre, Haymarket, married Bartolozzi’s daughter, who afterwards married Charles Mathews the elder. The print by Bartolozzi (artist unknown) is a most delightful thing altogether. A former owner of the copy we have in the British Museum has attributed the drawing to George Dance, but this, I am told, is not the official opinion.

*General James Edward Oglethorpe.*—His portrait by Reynolds was unfortunately lost in the fire which destroyed Belvoir Castle, the seat of the Duke of Rutland, and with it many fine works by that painter. It was painted in 1780 but never engraved, so, failing a better, the best available portrait is shown. The writer of the article in the *Dictionary of National Biography* has given the exact date of his birth, 1696, and the prevailing idea that he had attained to more

than one hundred years when he died must yield to the fact since we have it.

A forthright, on the spot, up-to-date etching should be a much better thing than an engraving *after* a drawing, and there is joy for the lover of art in the '*del. et sc.*' of the artist: *S. Ireland*. On the copy of the print in the British Museum is the following succinct account of the man. 'Died 1785, aged 102. Said to be the oldest general in Europe. Sketched from life at the sale of Johnson's books (February 13, 1785) when the general was reading a book he had purchased without spectacles. In 1706 he had an ensign's commission, and remembered having shot snipe in Conduit Mead where Conduit Street now stands.'

*James Northcote*.—Plymouth man, pupil of Reynolds, who lived to paint Ruskin's portrait. Best known to the general reader by Hazlitt's report of his conversations, and by the portions of an autobiography recently published. The entries under his name in Dr. Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell* are numerous, and he is proved by the numerous portraits we have to have been an exceptionally picturesque individual, as well as a very original character. There is extant in

manuscript a letter from Ruskin's father to James Northcote bespeaking an early copy of his *Life of Sir Joshua Reynolds* then about to be published.

There is something to be said, in conclusion, about the omissions found to be necessary. The limitation to one hundred portraits is the measure of the editor's freedom, and the fact that some pertaining more properly to Johnson's *Tour in the Hebrides* have been held over will account for some of the Scotsmen. Looming large as we look backwards are the statesmen, judges, and clerics who helped in their day to make history, but *their* portraits are everywhere, and consequently not in these volumes—not, at least, in great numbers. The possessors of what seem to have been the most interesting faces have been selected as typical, and not unfairly, I hope:—Lord Thurlow and Bishop Newton, for instance. The poets have their own little spheres and niches, their little stone tablets in churches, and the greatest are not the most beautiful, so we have to be sparing here.

The most convincing of reasons for not showing a portrait is that it does not exist, and some of Fortune's tricks are the meanest. She may have promised Savage his portrait, but not that

she would pay for it, and that portrait has yet to be found. So with many of Johnson's intimates — Mrs. Desmoulins, Robert Levet, and others of his menagerie.

We have seen how Boswell obtained his portrait, and it will never, I suppose, be known how much the 'Literary Club' owed, not of cash, but of thanks, to its founder, Sir Joshua Reynolds.

Mrs. Abington *con amore*, Kitty Fisher, Nelly O'Brien, Harriet Powell, Polly Kennedy, 'Miss Emily,' and Mrs. Robinson, but as often as any of these he painted his men-friends in Johnson's circle,—including the replicas, there were not less than twelve portraits of Johnson, of Burke eight, Garrick seven, Fox six, Goldsmith five, and Sir William Chambers three (let others correct the figures, which I take from the roughest notes). Portraits of Bennet Langton, John Courtenay, and Dr. Fordyce (Club members) were painted but not engraved, and very probably others that have been overlooked.

To what an extent we who are working this vein are indebted to Reynolds alone must have been made clear to the reader. It is in the world outside his world that the trouble begins—sometimes to result in a 'find,' sometimes in a sense of loss.

There is no one engaged in this kind of work who has not to thank Dr. Birkbeck Hill for supplies that have come from his never-failing sources of information, and not for that only, but for something that has been added, converting what might have been doles into keepsakes, to be put where one's thoughts are hidden. Remembering that but for his help we should not have been brought face to face with Johnson's wife and her daughter, I feel as if bidden to speak for others.

ERNEST RADFORD.



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RIGHT HON. WILLIAM WINDHAM  
MISS FANNY BURNEY (MADAME  
D'ARBLAY)  
DR. BROCKLESBY  
FRANCES REYNOLDS

## INTRODUCTION

MORE than sixty years ago, Carlyle, writing in *Fraser's Magazine*, observed in that manner of his which has now become part of our incorporate existence, that the new edition of Boswell, then lately undertaken by Mr. Croker, was a praiseworthy but no miraculous procedure—in no way an event in universal history, and indeed in very truth one of the most insignificant of things.

If that were true in 1832 of so pretentious an edition of Boswell's Johnson as Mr. Croker's, the insignificance of the present publication is almost startling. Boswell's immortal biography has been reprinted many times since the date of Carlyle's famous article, and in our own immediate hour we have had the advantage of re-reading it in the careful and interesting edition of the late Mr. Napier, as well as in the splendid volumes of my revered friend, Dr. Birkbeck Hill, whose eager and unresting toil and minute diligence has left scarce anything behind him for even the most humble-minded of gleaners in the Johnsonian fields.

When you know you must be beaten, the wisest course is to decline competition.

The merit of these volumes is all or nearly all Boswell's and the printers', a race of men whose services in the cause of letters Dr. Johnson, who knew 'The Trade' from top to bottom, never forgot. Who does not remember the famous occasion when he apologised to a compositor? 'Mr. Compositor, I ask your pardon. Mr. Compositor, I ask your pardon, again and again.' Any merit that is not Boswell's or the printers' belongs to Mr. Edmund Malone, whose *Life*, by Sir James Prior, is well worth the two or three shillings which is all the second-hand booksellers are in the habit of asking for it.

The biography itself first appeared in two comfortable quartos in 1791, no less than four years after the authorised biography by Johnson's literary executor, Sir John Hawkins. The second edition followed in 1793. Boswell died in 1795. The third edition was intrusted to Malone, and bears date 1799. Malone died in 1812, having lived to see the sixth (1811) edition through the press.

The notes in the present edition are for the most part to be found in Malone's editions: my own notes are few and far between. I made many notes, but on reflection I have struck most of them out, feeling myself convinced not of their worthlessness but of their unimportance. The unsigned and unbracketed notes are Boswell's. The notes signed M. are Malone's. Those signed A. B. are mine. The other notes bear the names of their makers.

The English-speaking race is only just beginning to

enter into its huge and glorious inheritance of literature. The number of persons who have never read Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, and who yet are capable of enjoying it to the tips of their fingers, is enormous, and yearly increases. To get hold of these people, to thrust Boswell into their hands, to obtrude him upon their notice, and thus to capture their intelligence and engage their interest, is the work of the missionary of letters, who does not need to encumber himself with the commentators, but only to do all that he can to circulate the original text in the most convenient and attractive form. It is not laziness or indifference which prompts me to say this, but holy zeal and the most absolute conviction.

After all, the book is the thing. Literature was meant to give pleasure, to excite interest, to banish solitude, to make the fireside more attractive than the tavern, to give joy to those who are still capable of joy, and—why should we not admit it?—to drug sorrow and divert thought.

There is a pestilent notion abroad, at least so it seems to me, that all our best books, our classics, were written either for children or for learned or half-learned editors and teachers, or it may be even for lecturers; and yet Dr. Swift did not originally intend *Gulliver's Travels* for the nursery, nor did Sir Walter Scott, when he published most of the Waverley novels in three volumes octavo at the price of thirty-one shillings and sixpence, think he was competing with good Mr. Newbery's successor in St. Paul's Churchyard.

Children are all very well, and the sooner they are introduced to Shakespeare and Scott the better ; but it is men and women who bear the burden of life and the heat of the day, and it was for them that literature was intended.

As for the learned editors who load the page of their author with notes and references and cross-references, personally I delight in their labours and reverence their devotion ; but in the first instance, at all events (I repeat), the book is the thing. Leave Boswell alone to tell his own tale, to make his own impression. This once done, the commentators will march in through the breach Boswell has made.

But for teachers and examiners, I hold the whole tribe in abhorrence. I hate to see them annexing fresh domains to their gloomy empire. ‘Examiners ! hands off !’ is surely a natural exclamation as their spears blacken the horizon. Our lives do not terminate in the torture-chambers of the examiner, and we shall sorely need the solace of books like Boswell’s long after we have bidden class-room and senate-house an eternal farewell. I never could bring myself to take any pleasure in Calverley’s famous Imaginary Examination Paper on *Pickwick*. It made me uneasy, since it showed dull fools how the thing might be done in deadly earnest.

There is perhaps no book in the whole range of English literature so richly endowed with those qualities of interest, charm, humour, and life which go to make up enjoyment, as Boswell’s *Life of Johnson*. To begin



with, it is a big book. It is all well enough in sundry moods to love to be confined within a scanty plot of ground—and who can be otherwise than alive to the fascination of such a short story as *La Grande Bretèche*, or of such a short autobiography as Gibbon's?—but amidst the ups and downs of life, for all the days of the week and the years of one's days, there is nothing so attractive, so provocative of affection, as a big book—that is, a long book, a crowded gallery, a busy thoroughfare, with all its fleeting figures, its chance references, its waifs and strays of character. Nothing else so stirs our sluggish imagination or so penetrates us with the 'stir of existence,' with the sweet, sad music of humanity.

No writer I know of has brought out the fascination of these large canvases with more moving effect than the man whose name I have already mentioned with the respect due to the greatest author the century has seen, Thomas Carlyle. With what a devouring eye had he read his Clarendon and his Boswell!—his own pages are rich with their recollections.

'We ourselves can remember reading in Lord Clarendon with feelings perhaps somehow accidentally opened to it—certainly with a depth of impression strange to us then and now—that insignificant-looking passage where Charles, after the battle of Worcester, glides down with Squire Careless from the Royal Oak at nightfall, being hungry; how, making a shift to get over hedges and ditches, after walking at least eight or nine miles, which were the more grievous to the

king by the weight of his boots, before morning they came to a poor cottage, the owner whereof being a Roman Catholic was known to Careless. How this poor drudge, being knocked up from his snoring, carried them into a little barn full of hay, which was a better lodging than he had for himself, and by-and-by, not without difficulty, brought his Majesty "a piece of bread and a great pot of butter-milk," saying candidly that "he himself lived by his daily labour, and that what he had brought him was the fare he and his wife had," on which nourishing diet his Majesty, "staying upon the hay mow," feeds thankfully for two days, and then departs under new guidance, having first changed clothes, down to the very shirt and old pair of shoes, with his landlord, and so, as worthy Bunyan has it, "goes on his way and sees him no more." Singular enough, if we will think of it! This, then, was a genuine flesh-and-blood rustic of the year 1651; he did actually swallow bread and butter-milk (not having ale and bacon) and do field labour; with these hob-nailed shoes has sprawled through mud roads in winter, and, jocund or not, driven his team afield in summer; he made bargains, had chafferings and hagglings, now a sore heart, now a glad one, was born, was a son, was a father, toiled in many ways, being forced to it, till the strength was all worn out of him, and then lay down "to rest his galled back," and sleep there till the long-distant morning! How comes it, that he alone of all the British rustics who tilled and lived along with him, on whom the blessed

sun on that same "fifth day of September" was shining, should have chanced to rise on us, that this poor pair of clouted shoes, out of the million million hides that have been tanned and cut and worn, should still subsist and hang visibly together? We see him but for a moment; for one moment the blanket of the night is rent asunder, so that we behold and see, and then closes over him—for ever.'

Carlyle was at heart a sentimentalist, and there may be some stern critics who think this particular piece of sentimentalism of his a little rank; but be that as it may, it is only from big books and from large canvases that pleasure of the kind I am referring to can be obtained, and Boswell's Johnson is full of such pleasure-giving, such fancy-stirring passages, revealing to us the actual life of man.

Though it would be ridiculous to profess to enumerate one by one the delights of a biography it has become impertinent to praise, yet next to its generous scale, one may harmlessly refer to the perfection of its method. This was no happy chance, no mere bit of good fortune, but the result of a real genius for portraiture, coupled with that infinite capacity for taking pains which is found allied to genius so often that it has sometimes been mistaken for it. That Boswell loved Johnson is plain enough, but that he loved himself still better, and was endlessly ambitious of literary fame, is at least equally certain. His genius prompted him what he could do, and told him that in the famous Doctor he had a subject made for

his hand. Like Fred Bayham he felt he was in for a good thing, and he meant to make the very most of it. He saw his way to write a great book, to do something which, despite the sneers of Gibbon and the patronage of Burke, no other member of the club could do one half or one-quarter as well. He was to prove himself a greater portrait painter than Sir Joshua himself. The careful reader of the dedication and of the first pages of the biography cannot fail to see with what confidence, as well as with what determination, Boswell approached his great task.

Boswell's oddities and absurdities need not interfere with the frankness of our recognition of his superlative talent. The pains he took to collect material exposed him to ridicule. In that strange book, which ought at least to be in the usually small library of every owner of racehorses, the *Memoirs of Thomas Holcroft*, the author records how Mr. Lowe (who will be found mentioned in the biography) told him the following story: 'Lowe had requested Johnson to write him a letter, which Johnson did, and Boswell came in while it was writing; his attention was immediately fixed. Lowe took the letter, retired, and was followed by Boswell. "Nothing," said Lowe, "could surprise me more. Till that moment he had so entirely overlooked me that I did not imagine he knew there was such a creature in existence, and he now accosted me with the most overstrained and insinuating compliments possible. 'How do you do, Mr. Lowe? I hope you are well, Mr. Lowe? Pardon

my freedom, Mr. Lowe, but I think I saw my dear friend Dr. Johnson writing a letter for you.' 'Yes, sir.' 'I hope you will not think me rude, but if it would not be too great a favour, you would infinitely oblige me if you would just let me have a sight of it ; everything from that hand, you know, is so inestimable.' 'Sir, it is on my own private affairs, but——' 'I would not pry into a person's affairs, my dear Mr. Lowe, by any means. I am sure you would not accuse me of such a thing, only, if it were no particular secret——' 'Sir, you are welcome to read the letter. 'I thank you, my dear Mr. Lowe, you are very obliging. I take it exceedingly kind.' (Having read.) 'It is nothing I believe, Mr. Lowe, that you would be ashamed of——' 'Certainly not.' 'Why, then, my dear sir, if you would do me another favour you would make the obligation eternal. If you would but step to Peele's coffee-house with me and just suffer me to take a copy of it I would do anything in my power to oblige you.' I was so overcome," said Lowe, "by this sudden familiarity and condescension, accompanied with bows and grimaces, I had no power to refuse. We went to the coffee-house. My letter was presently transcribed, and as soon as he had put his document in his pocket Mr. Boswell walked away as erect and as proud as half an hour before. I ever after was unnoticed. Nay, I am not certain," added he sarcastically, "whether the Scotchman did not leave me, poor as he knew I was, to pay for my own dish of coffee."'

How all this painstaking and drudgery contrasts with the Doctor's own sublime indifference to material if he were not in the mood for it. 'Elated with the success of my spontaneous exertion to procure material and respectable aid to Johnson for his very favourite work, *The Lives of the Poets*, I hastened down to Mr. Thrale's at Streatham, where he now was, that I might ensure his being at home next day, and after dinner, when I thought he would receive the good news in the best humour, I announced it eagerly. "I have been at work for you to-day, sir. I have been with Lord Marchmont. He bade me tell you he has a great respect for you, and will call on you to-morrow at one o'clock, and communicate all he knows about Pope." Here I paused in full expectation that he would be pleased with this intelligence, would praise my active merit, and would be alert to embrace such an offer from a nobleman. But whether I had shown an over-exultation which provoked his spleen, or whether he was seized with a suspicion that I had obtruded him on Lord Marchmont and humbled him too much, or whether there was anything more than an unlucky fit of ill-humour, I know not, but to my surprise the result was.—JOHNSON: I shall not be in town to-morrow. I don't care to know about Pope. Mr. THRALE (surprised as I was and a little angry): I suppose, sir, Mr. Boswell thought that as you are to write Pope's life you would wish to know about him. JOHNSON: Wish! Why, yes. If it rained knowledge I'd hold out my hand, but I would not give myself

the trouble to go in quest of it. There was no arguing with him at the moment.'

Boswell is good enough to express a regret that Dr. Johnson had not written his own life, but all subsequent generations of English readers have good cause to rejoice that he did nothing to put Boswell off the track. Johnson soon got sick of a subject, and of no subject sooner than himself. He is indeed a splendid writer of biography, but his methods are not Boswellian, nor is the result by any means the same. His life, written by himself, would have been a gloomy, though majestic, fragment—a few peals of thunder and a heavy torrent of rain, and then some wearied exclamations and a frigid dismissal.

It is fair to remember that Boswell enjoyed to the full one enormous advantage. He had an absolutely free hand. \ Johnson left neither wife nor child. / I do not suppose Black Frank, his servant and residuary legatee, ever read a line of the great biography. There was no daughter married to a well-to-do tradesman to put her pen through the pathetic passages relating to old Michael Johnson, who, once a week, kept an open bookstall in Birmingham. There was no grandson in holy orders to water down the witticisms that have reverberated through the world. There were no political followers, no party associates, fearful of their own paltry reputations, to buzz like flies about the ears of the biographer. None the less, Boswell is entitled to the praise of a glorious intrepidity.

But what was Boswell's method? The question is

made difficult by the fact that Boswell's enormous success has been found to depend almost as much upon his own personality as upon Johnson's. It is the conjunction of the two that so tickles the midriff. This is well illustrated by the Lord Marchmont incident already quoted. Without Boswell's eagerness, fussiness, snobbishness, we should never have got the sublime, 'I don't care to know about Pope.' But though Boswell's personality, delightfully obtrusive as it is and provocative of a thousand humours, is inextricably mixed up with his success, he yet had a method which he has done his best to make plain to us, both in his *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides* (a book every bit as valuable and almost as amusing as the biography), and in his Dedication of the *Life* to Sir Joshua Reynolds, and in the Advertisement to, and the first few pages of, his *Magnum Opus* itself.

The motto on the title-page reveals the whole scheme—

'Quo fit ut omnis  
Votiva pateat veluti descripta tabella  
Vita senis.'

But again I ask what is the method? In the Dedication Boswell tells us that in his 'Tour he had been almost 'unboundedly open in his communications,' his desire being 'to display the wonderful fertility and readiness of Johnson's wit,' and he tells that inimitable story, so full of the marrow and fatness of our life here below, how the great Dr. Clarke ceased his merriment when he saw Beau Nash approaching.



‘My boys,’ said he, ‘let us be grave ; here comes a fool.’

The advertisement or preface to the first edition thus concludes : ‘Nor will I suppress my satisfaction in the consciousness that by recording so considerable a portion of the wisdom and wit of “the brightest ornament of the eighteenth century,” I have largely provided for the instruction and entertainment of mankind.’ Entertainment !—this is indeed a blessed word !

In the first eleven pages of the *Life*, Boswell with much clearness states his theory of biography. It is first of all based upon friendship. ‘I had the honour and happiness of enjoying his friendship for upwards of twenty years.’ Experts in dates have pointed out (and it was worth doing) that though Boswell knew Johnson for the last twenty years of his life, he was by no means an habitual associate of his, and that long months would go by without their ever meeting ; nor when they did meet, were they, except on very rare occasions, long together. Whether this was a drawback may be doubted. There are few duller biographies than those written by wives, secretaries, or other domesticated creatures. The point of view of these persons soon becomes intolerable. Neither the purr of the hearth-rug nor the unemancipated admiration of the private secretary should be allowed to dominate a biography. Boswell’s admiration for Johnson was open-mouthed enough, but his attitude towards him was that of an extern. But the book is

based on intimacy. The next point Boswell proceeds to emphasise is that Johnson's conversation, its 'extraordinary vigour and vivacity,' constituted 'one of the first features of his character.' Accordingly he congratulates himself upon his facility in recollecting, and his assiduity in recording, Johnson's conversation.

Here we are upon the keystone of the bridge.

'In the chronological series of Johnson's life which I trace as distinctly as I can year by year, I produce wherever it is in my power his own minutes, letters, or conversation, being convinced that this mode is more lively.' And again: 'I am fully aware of the objections which may be made to the minuteness on some occasions of my detail of Johnson's conversation, and how happily it is adapted for the petty exercise of ridicule by men of superficial understanding and ludicrous fancy; but I remain firm and confident in my opinion that minute particulars are frequently characteristic and always amusing.'

We see in these and other kindred passages Boswell's scheme and his method. He knew Johnson, he loved him; he especially delighted in the vigour and vivacity of his conversation, and he determined to portray him in such a manner as to be entertaining, lively, and amusing. And what is more to the purpose, he has succeeded.

Undoubtedly the great feature of Boswell's book is its record of Johnson's talk. There is nothing else like it anywhere.

For a talker Johnson had all the necessary qualifications. He possessed vast and varied information on all kinds of subjects—he knew not only books, but a great deal about trades and manufactures, ways of existence, customs of business. He had been in all sorts of societies, kept every kind of company. He had fought the battle of life in a hand-to-hand encounter, had slept in garrets, done hack-work for booksellers, been houseless at night—in short, had lived on  $4\frac{1}{2}$ d. a day. By the side of Johnson Burke's knowledge of men and things was bookish and notional. Johnson had a great range of fact. Next he had a strong mind operating upon and in love with life. Then, of course, whenever stirred by contact with his friends, and inflamed by the passion for contradiction, or justly irritated by the flimsy platitudes of fools, he had ready for immediate use the quickest wit and the most magnificent vocabulary ever placed at the disposal of man. Add to this an almost divine tenderness of heart, a deep-rooted affectionateness of disposition, and a positively brutal aversion to every kind of exaggeration, and you get a combination of qualities no one has a right to expect.

Nor must this be forgotten—Boswell's Johnson is the post-pension Johnson. Never before nor since did a beggarly £300 a year of public money yield (thanks mainly to Boswell) such a harvest for the public good. Not only did it keep the Doctor himself in brown suits and bob-wigs, and provide a home for Mrs. Williams, and for Mrs. Desmoulins, and for Miss

Carmichael, and for Mr. Levett, but it has kept us all going ever since. This blessed pension gave Johnson ease and leisure—ease of mind, and leisure to talk.

The most noticeable characteristics of Johnson's talk seem to be good sense, brilliant wit, and a lively dialectical imagination, which enabled him joyfully and triumphantly to pursue his subject and crush his opponent with a vigour that gathered force as it proceeded. No talk was ever freer from pedantry, nor can it be said that profundity is one of its notes. It is indeed full of good feeling, and a melancholy as well as an obstreperous humour. It teaches one how to live rather than what to believe. Boswell was quite right, his record of Johnson's talk is entertaining and lively and amusing. I will give one example of what I mean by dialectical imagination.

Talking of those who denied the truth of Christianity, he said: 'It is always easy to be on the negative side. If a man were now to deny that there is salt upon the table, you could not reduce him to an absurdity. Come, let us try this a little further. I deny that Canada is taken, and I can support my denial by pretty good arguments. The French are a much more numerous people than we are; and it is not likely they would allow us to take it. But the Ministry have assured us in all the formality of the *Gazette* that it is taken. Very true. But the Ministry have put us to an enormous expense by the war in America, and it is their interest to persuade us that we have got something for our money. But the fact

is confirmed by thousands of men who were at the taking of it. Ay, but these men have still more interest in deceiving us. They don't want that you should think the French have beat them, but that they have beat the French. Now, suppose you should go over and find that it is really taken, that would only satisfy yourself—for when you come home we will not believe you. We will say you have been bribed. Yet, sir, notwithstanding all these plausible objections, we have no doubt that Canada is really ours. Such is the weight of common testimony. How much stronger are the evidences of the Christian religion.'

This may not be very close reasoning or very convincing argumentation, but its *crescendo* is exciting and effective, and betokens a gift which on the Treasury or Front Opposition Bench would have been rewarded with enthusiastic cheers and laughter.

It is sometimes said Johnson's talk as recorded by Boswell has killed Johnson's books. This is nonsense. Boswell's book is of course vastly more entertaining, lively, and amusing than *Rasselas* or the *Rambler*, and consequently far more people have read and will read Boswell than have or will read Johnson. This is inevitable. *The Heart of Midlothian* numbers more readers than Butler's *Analogy*. To wish it otherwise is to reconstruct human nature and to people the globe with another race of mortals.

But to say that nobody reads Johnson is sheer nonsense. There is always somebody reading Johnson. Genius, thank Heaven, is never crowded out, and

## I            LIFE OF DR. JOHNSON

Johnson (as everybody knows) was a writer of genius. His *Lives of the Poets*, his Preface to Shakespeare and to the English Dictionary—the *Dictionary* itself—many of the *Ramblers* and *Idlers* (especially the ‘Dick Minim’ *Idlers* of June 1759), did they stand alone on our shelves, would be enough, with the famous portraits of Sir Joshua (so instinct are they with character, so charged with reality) to transmit from one generation of readers to another the fascinating personality of a great man.

But fortunately we have much more—how much more it is for the reader of the following pages to say.

A. B.

TO

SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS

*My dear Sir,—Every liberal motive that can actuate an author in the dedication of his labours concurs in directing me to you, as the person to whom the following work should be inscribed.*

*If there be a pleasure in celebrating the distinguished merit of a contemporary, mixed with a certain degree of vanity not altogether inexcusable, in appearing fully sensible of it, where can I find one, in complimenting whom I can with more general approbation gratify those feelings? Your excellence, not only in the Art over which you have long presided with unrivalled fame, but also in philosophy and elegant literature, is well known to the present, and will continue to be the admiration of future ages. Your equal and placid temper, your variety of conversation, your true politeness, by which you are so amiable in private society, and that enlarged hospitality which has long made your house a common centre of union for the great, the accomplished, the learned, and the ingenious; all these qualities I can, in perfect confidence of not being accused of flattery, ascribe to you.*

*If a man may indulge an honest pride, in having it known to the world that he has been thought worthy of particular attention by a person of the first eminence in the age in which he lived, whose company has been univer-*

sally courted, I am justified in availing myself of the usual privilege of a *Dedication*, when I mention that there has been a long and uninterrupted friendship between us.

If gratitude should be acknowledged for favours received, I have this opportunity, my dear sir, most sincerely to thank you for the many happy hours which I owe to your kindness,—for the cordiality with which you have at all times been pleased to welcome me,—for the number of valuable acquaintances to whom you have introduced me,—for the *noctes cœnæque Deum* which I have enjoyed under your roof.

If a work should be inscribed to one who is master of the subject of it, and whose approbation, therefore, must ensure it credit and success, the *Life of Dr. Johnson* is, with the greatest propriety, dedicated to Sir Joshua Reynolds, who was the intimate and beloved friend of that great man; the friend whom he declared to be ‘the most invulnerable man he knew; whom, if he should quarrel with him, he should find the most difficulty how to abuse.’ You, my dear sir, studied him, and knew him well: you venerated and admired him. Yet, luminous as he was upon the whole, you perceived all the shades which mingled in the grand composition; all the little peculiarities and slight blemishes which marked the literary Colossus. Your very warm commendation of the specimen which I gave in my *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides*, of my being able to preserve his conversation in an authentic and lively manner, which opinion the Public has confirmed, was the best encouragement for me to persevere in my purpose of producing the whole of my stores.

In one respect, this work will, in some passages, be different from the former. In my *Tour* I was almost



*unboundedly open in my communications, and from my eagerness to display the wonderful fertility and readiness of Johnson's wit, freely showed to the world its dexterity, even when I was myself the object of it. I trusted that I should be liberally understood, as knowing very well what I was about, and by no means as simply unconscious of the pointed effects of the satire. I own, indeed, that I was arrogant enough to suppose that the tenor of the rest of the book would sufficiently guard me against such a strange imputation. But it seems I judged too well of the world; for, though I could scarcely believe it, I have been undoubtedly informed, that many persons, especially in distant quarters, not penetrating enough into Johnson's character, so as to understand his mode of treating his friends, have arraigned my judgment, instead of seeing that I was sensible of all that they could observe.*

*It is related of the great Dr. Clarke, that when in one of his leisure hours he was unbending himself with a few friends in the most playful and frolicsome manner, he observed Beau Nash approaching, upon which he suddenly stopped: 'My boys (said he), let us be grave: here comes a fool.' The world, my friend, I have found to be a great fool, as to that particular on which it has become necessary to speak very plainly. I have, therefore, in this work been more reserved; and though I tell nothing but the truth, I have still kept in my mind that the whole truth is not always to be exposed. This, however, I have managed so as to occasion no diminution of the pleasure which my book should afford; though malignity may sometimes be disappointed of its gratification.—I am, my dear sir, your much obliged friend, and faithful humble servant,*

**JAMES BOSWELL.**

*London, April 20, 1791.*

## ADVERTISEMENT TO THE FIRST EDITION

I AT last deliver to the world a Work which I have long promised, and of which, I am afraid, too high expectations have been raised. The delay of its publication must be imputed, in a considerable degree, to the extraordinary zeal which has been shown by distinguished persons in all quarters to supply me with additional information concerning its illustrious subject; resembling in this the grateful tribes of ancient nations, of which every individual was eager to throw a stone upon the grave of a departed hero, and thus to share in the pious office of erecting an honourable monument to his memory.

The labour and anxious attention with which I have collected and arranged the materials of which these volumes are composed will hardly be conceived by those who read them with careless facility. The stretch of mind and prompt assiduity by which so many conversations were preserved, I myself, at some distance of time, contemplate with wonder; and I must be allowed to suggest, that the nature of the work in other respects, as it consists of innumerable detached particulars, all which, even the most minute,

I have spared no pains to ascertain with a scrupulous authenticity, has occasioned a degree of trouble far beyond that of any other species of composition. Were I to detail the books which I have consulted, and the inquiries which I have found it necessary to make by various channels, I should probably be thought ridiculously ostentatious. Let me only observe, as a specimen of my trouble, that I have sometimes been obliged to run half over London in order to fix a date correctly, which, when I had accomplished, I well knew would obtain me no praise, though a failure would have been to my discredit. And after all, perhaps, hard as it may be, I shall not be surprised if omissions or mistakes be pointed out with invidious severity. I have also been extremely careful as to the exactness of my quotations ; holding that there is a respect due to the public, which should oblige every author to attend to this, and never to presume to introduce them with, ‘I think I have read,’ or ‘If I remember right,’ when the originals may be examined.

I beg leave to express my warmest thanks to those who have been pleased to favour me with communications and advice in the conduct of my work. But I cannot sufficiently acknowledge my obligations to my friend Mr. Malone, who was so good as to allow me to read to him almost the whole of my manuscript, and make such remarks as were greatly for the advantage of the work ; though it is but fair to him to mention, that upon many occasions I differed from him, and followed my own judgment. I regret exceedingly that I was deprived of the benefit of his revision, when not more than one half of the book had

passed through the press ; but after having completed his very laborious and admirable edition of *Shakespeare*, for which he generously would accept of no other reward but that fame which he has so deservedly obtained, he fulfilled his promise of a long-wished-for visit to his relations in Ireland ; from whence his safe return *finibus Atticis* is desired by his friends here, with all the classical ardour of *Sic te Diva potens Cypri* ; for there is no man in whom more elegant and worthy qualities are united, and whose society, therefore, is more valued by those who know him.

It is painful to me to think, that while I was carrying on this work, several of those to whom it would have been most interesting have died. Such melancholy disappointments we know to be incident to humanity ; but we do not feel them the less. Let me particularly lament the Reverend Thomas Warton and the Reverend Dr. Adams. Mr. Warton, amidst his variety of genius and learning, was an excellent biographer. His contributions to my collection are highly estimable ; and as he had a true relish of my *Tour to the Hebrides*, I trust I should now have been gratified with a larger share of his kind approbation. Dr. Adams, eminent as the head of a college, as a writer, and as a most amiable man, had known Johnson from his early years, and was his friend through life. What reason I had to hope for the countenance of that venerable gentleman to this Work will appear from what he wrote to me upon a former occasion from Oxford, November 17, 1785 :—

‘DEAR SIR,—I hazard this letter, not knowing where it will find you, to thank you for your very agreeable *Tour*, which I found here on my return from the country, and in which you

## ADVERTISEMENT TO FIRST EDITION lvi

have depicted our friend so perfectly to my fancy, in every attitude, every scene and situation, that I have thought myself in the company, and of the party almost throughout. It has given very general satisfaction; and those who have found most fault with a passage here and there have agreed that they could not help going through, and being entertained with the whole. I wish, indeed, some few gross expressions had been softened, and a few of our hero's foibles had been a little more shaded; but it is useful to see the weaknesses incident to great minds; and you have given us Dr. Johnson's authority that in history all ought to be told.'

Such a sanction to my faculty of giving a just representation of Dr. Johnson I could not conceal. Nor will I suppress my satisfaction in the consciousness, that by recording so considerable a portion of the wisdom and wit of 'the brightest ornament of the eighteenth century,'<sup>1</sup> I have largely provided for the instruction and entertainment of mankind.

*London, April 20, 1791.*

## ADVERTISEMENT TO THE SECOND EDITION

THAT I was anxious for the success of a work which had employed much of my time and labour, I do not wish to conceal: but whatever doubts I at any time entertained have been entirely removed by the very favourable reception with which it has been honoured. That reception has excited my best exertions to render my book more perfect; and in this endeavour I have had the assistance not only of some of my particular

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<sup>1</sup> See Mr. Malone's Preface to his edition of Shakespeare.

friends, but of many other learned and ingenious men, by which I have been enabled to rectify some mistakes, and to enrich the Work with many valuable additions. These I have ordered to be printed separately in quarto, for the accommodation of the purchasers of the first edition. May I be permitted to say that the typography of both editions does honour to the press of Mr. Henry Baldwin, now Master of the Worshipful Company of Stationers, whom I have long known a worthy man and an obliging friend.

In the strangely mixed scenes of human existence our feelings are often at once pleasing and painful. Of this truth the progress of the present Work furnishes a striking instance. It was highly gratifying to me that my friend, Sir Joshua Reynolds, to whom it is inscribed, lived to peruse it, and to give the strongest testimony to its fidelity ; but before a second edition, which he contributed to improve, could be finished, the world has been deprived of that most valuable man ; a loss of which the regret will be deep, and lasting, and extensive, proportionate to the felicity which he diffused through a wide circle of admirers and friends.

In reflecting that the illustrious subject of this Work, by being more extensively and intimately known, however elevated before, has risen in the veneration and love of mankind, I feel a satisfaction beyond what fame can afford. We cannot, indeed, too much or too often admire his wonderful powers of mind, when we consider that the principal store of wit and wisdom which this Work contains was not a particular selection from his general conversation, but was merely his occasional talk at such times as I had the good

fortune to be in his company ; and, without doubt, if his discourse at other periods had been collected with the same attention, the whole tenor of what he uttered would have been found equally excellent.

His strong, clear, and animated enforcement of religion, morality, loyalty, and subordination, while it delights and improves the wise and the good, will, I trust, prove an effectual antidote to that detestable sophistry which has been lately imported from France, under the false name of Philosophy, and with a malignant industry has been employed against the peace, good order, and happiness of society, in our free and prosperous country ; but, thanks be to God, without producing the pernicious effects which were hoped for by its propagators.

It seems to me, in my moments of self-complacency, that this extensive biographical Work, however inferior in its nature, may in one respect be assimilated to the *Odyssey*. Amidst a thousand entertaining and instructive episodes the hero is never long out of sight ; for they all are in some degree connected with him ; and he, in the whole course of the history, is exhibited by the author for the best advantage of his readers :

—Quid virtus et quid sapientia possit,  
Utile proposuit nobis exemplar Ulyssen.

Should there be any cold-blooded and morose mortals who really dislike this book, I will give them a story to apply. When the great Duke of Marlborough, accompanied by Lord Cadogan, was one day reconnoitring the army in Flanders, a heavy rain came on, and they both called for their cloaks. Lord Cadogan's servant, a good-humoured, alert lad, brought

his Lordship's in a minute. The Duke's servant, a lazy, sulky dog, was so sluggish that his Grace, being wet to the skin, reproved him, and had for answer, with a grunt, 'I came as fast as I could,' upon which the Duke calmly said, 'Cadogan, I would not for a thousand pounds have that fellow's temper.'

There are some men, I believe, who have, or think they have, a very small share of vanity. Such may speak of their literary fame in a decorous style of diffidence. But I confess that I am so formed by nature and by habit, that to restrain the effusion of delight on having obtained such fame, to me would be truly painful. Why then should I suppress it? Why 'out of the abundance of the heart' should I not speak? Let me then mention with a warm, but no insolent exultation, that I have been regaled with spontaneous praise of my Work by many and various persons eminent for their rank, learning, talents, and accomplishments; much of which praise I have under their hands to be repositied in my archives at Auchinleck. An honourable and reverend friend, speaking of the favourable reception of my volumes, even in the circles of fashion and elegance, said to me, 'You have made them all talk Johnson.' Yes, I may add, I have Johnsonised the land; and I trust they will not only talk, but think, Johnson.

To enumerate those to whom I have been thus indebted would be tediously ostentatious. I cannot, however, but name one, whose praise is truly valuable, not only on account of his knowledge and abilities, but on account of the magnificent, yet dangerous embassy in which he is now employed, which makes everything that relates to him peculiarly interesting.



## ADVERTISEMENT TO SECOND EDITION lxi

Lord Macartney favoured me with his own copy of my book, with a number of notes, of which I have availed myself. On the first leaf I found, in his Lordship's handwriting, an inscription of such high commendation, that even I, vain as I am, cannot prevail on myself to publish it.

[*July* 1, 1793.]

## ADVERTISEMENT TO THE THIRD EDITION

SEVERAL valuable letters, and other curious matter, having been communicated to the author too late to be arranged in that chronological order which he had endeavoured uniformly to observe in his work, he was obliged to introduce them in his second edition by way of Addenda, as commodiously as he could. In the present edition they have been distributed in their proper places. In revising his volumes for a new edition, he had pointed out where some of these materials should be inserted; but unfortunately, in the midst of his labours, he was seized with a fever, of which, to the great regret of all his friends, he died on the 19th of May 1795. All the notes that he had written in the margin of the copy which he had in part revised are here faithfully preserved; and a few new notes have been added, principally by some of those friends to whom the author in the former editions acknowledged his obligations. Those subscribed with the letter B. were communicated by Dr. Burney; those

to which the letters J. B. are annexed by the Rev. J. B. Blakeway of Shrewsbury, to whom Mr. Boswell acknowledged himself indebted for some judicious remarks on the first edition of his Work; and the letters J. B.—O. are annexed to some remarks furnished by the author's second son, a student of Brasenose College in Oxford. Some valuable observations were communicated by James Bindley, Esq., First Commissioner in the Stamp-Office, which have been acknowledged in their proper places. For all those without any signature Mr. Malone is answerable. Every new remark, not written by the author, for the sake of distinction has been enclosed within crotchets; in one instance, however, the printer, by mistake, has affixed this mark to a note relative to the Rev. Thomas Fysche Palmer (see vol. iv.) which was written by Mr. Boswell, and therefore ought not to have been thus distinguished.

I have only to add, that the proof-sheets of the present edition not having passed through my hands, I am not answerable for any typographical errors that may be found in it. Having, however, been printed at the very accurate press of Mr. Baldwin, I make no doubt it will be found not less perfect than the former edition; the greatest care having been taken, by correctness and elegance, to do justice to one of the most instructive and entertaining works in the English language.

EDM. MALONE.

*April 8, 1799.*

## ADVERTISEMENT TO THE FOURTH EDITION

IN this edition are inserted some new letters, of which the greater part has been obligingly communicated by the Reverend Doctor Vyse, Rector of Lambeth. Those written by Dr. Johnson concerning his mother in her last illness, furnish a new proof of his great piety and tenderness of heart, and therefore cannot but be acceptable to the readers of this very popular work. Some new Notes also have been added, which, as well as the observations inserted in the third edition, and the letters now introduced, are carefully included within crotchets, that the author may not be answerable for anything which had not the sanction of his approbation. The remarks of his friends are distinguished as formerly, except those of Mr. Malone, to which the letter M. is now subjoined. Those to which the letter K. is affixed were communicated by my learned friend the Reverend Doctor Kearney, formerly Senior Fellow of Trinity College, Dublin, and now beneficed in the diocese of Raphoe in Ireland, of which he is Archdeacon.

Of a work which has been before the Public for thirteen years with increasing approbation, and of which near four thousand copies have been dispersed, it is not necessary to say more; yet I cannot refrain from adding, that, highly as it is now estimated, it will, I am confident, be still more valued by posterity a century hence, when all the actors in the scene shall be numbered with the dead; when the excellent and

extraordinary man, whose wit and wisdom are here recorded, shall be viewed at a still greater distance ; and the instruction and entertainment they afford will at once produce reverential gratitude, admiration, and delight. E. M.

*June 20, 1804.*

## ADVERTISEMENT TO THE FIFTH EDITION

IN this fifth edition some errors of the press which had crept into the text and notes, in consequence of repeated impressions, have been corrected. Two letters written by Dr. Johnson, and several new notes, have been added ; by which, it is hoped, this valuable work is still further improved. E. M.

*January 1, 1807.*

*After my death I wish no other herald,  
No other speaker of my living actions,  
To keep mine honour from corruption,  
But such an honest chronicler as Griffith.*<sup>1</sup>

SHAKESPEARE, *Henry VIII.*

<sup>1</sup> See Dr. Johnson's letter to Mrs. Thrale, dated Ostick in Skie, September 30, 1773:—"Boswell writes a regular journal of our travels, which I think contains as much of what I say and do, as of all other occurrences together, "*for such a faithful chronicler is Griffith.*"



## THE LIFE OF SAMUEL JOHNSON, LL.D.

To write the Life of him who excelled all mankind in writing the lives of others, and who, whether we consider his extraordinary endowments, or his various works, has been equalled by few in any age, is an arduous, and may be reckoned in me a presumptuous task.

Had Dr. Johnson written his own life, in conformity with the opinion which he has given,<sup>1</sup> that every man's life may be best written by himself; had he employed, in the preservation of his own history, that clearness of narration and elegance of language in which he has embalmed so many eminent persons, the world would probably have had the most perfect example of biography that was ever exhibited. But although he at different times, in a desultory manner, committed to writing many particulars of the progress of his mind and fortunes, he never had persevering diligence enough to form them into a regular composition. Of these memorials a few have been preserved; but the greater part was consigned by him to the flames, a few days before his death.

As I had the honour and happiness of enjoying his friendship for upwards of twenty years; as I had the

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<sup>1</sup> *Ialer*, No. 84.

scheme of writing his life constantly in view; as he was well apprised of this circumstance, and from time to time obligingly satisfied my inquiries, by communicating to me the incidents of his early years; as I acquired a facility in recollecting, and was very assiduous in recording, his conversation, of which the extraordinary vigour and vivacity constituted one of the first features of his character; and as I have spared no pains in obtaining materials concerning him, from every quarter where I could discover that they were to be found, and have been favoured with the most liberal communications by his friends; I flatter myself that few biographers have entered upon such a work as this with more advantages, independent of literary abilities, in which I am not vain enough to compare myself with some great names who have gone before me in this kind of writing.

Since my work was announced several Lives and Memoirs of Dr. Johnson have been published, the most voluminous of which is one compiled for the booksellers of London, by Sir John Hawkins, Knight,<sup>1</sup> a man whom, during my long intimacy with Dr. Johnson, I never saw in his company, I think, but once, and I am sure not above twice. Johnson might

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<sup>1</sup> The greatest part of this book was written while Sir John Hawkins was alive; and I avow that one object of my strictures was to make him feel some compunction for his illiberal treatment of Dr. Johnson. Since his decease I have suppressed several of my remarks upon his work. But though I would not 'war with the dead' *offensively*, I think it necessary to be strenuous in *defence* of my illustrious friend, which I cannot be without strong animadversions upon a writer who has greatly injured him. Let me add that though I doubt I should not have been very prompt to gratify Sir John Hawkins with any compliment in his lifetime, I do now frankly acknowledge that, in my opinion, his volume, however inadequate and improper as a life of Dr. Johnson, and however discredited by unpardonable inaccuracies in other respects, contains a collection of curious anecdotes and observations which few men but its author could have brought together.



have esteemed him for his decent, religious demeanour, and his knowledge of books and literary history ; but from the rigid formality of his manners, it is evident that they never could have lived together with companionable ease and familiarity ; nor had Sir John Hawkins that nice perception which was necessary to mark the finer and less obvious parts of Johnson's character. His being appointed one of his executors, gave him an opportunity of taking possession of such fragments of a diary and other papers as were left ; of which, before delivering them up to the residuary legatee, whose property they were, he endeavoured to extract the substance. In this he has not been very successful, as I have found upon a perusal of those papers, which have been since transferred to me. Sir John Hawkins's ponderous labours, I must acknowledge, exhibit a *farrago*, of which a considerable portion is not devoid of entertainment to the lovers of literary gossiping ; but besides its being swelled out with long unnecessary extracts from various works (even one of several leaves from Osborne's *Harleian Catalogue*, and those not compiled by Johnson, but by Oldys), a very small part of it relates to the person who is the subject of the book ; and, in that, there is such an inaccuracy in the statement of facts, as in so solemn an author is hardly excusable, and certainly makes his narrative very unsatisfactory. But what is still worse, there is throughout the whole of it a dark uncharitable cast, by which the most unfavourable construction is put upon almost every circumstance in the character and conduct of my illustrious friend ; who, I trust, will, by a true and fair delineation, be vindicated both from the injurious misrepresentations

of this author, and from the slighter aspersions of a lady who once lived in great intimacy with him.

There is, in the British Museum, a letter from Bishop Warburton to Dr. Birch, on the subject of biography, which, though I am aware it may expose me to a charge of artfully raising the value of my own work, by contrasting it with that of which I have spoken, is so well conceived and expressed, that I cannot refrain from here inserting it :

‘I shall endeavour (says Dr. Warburton) to give you what satisfaction I can in anything you want to be satisfied in any subject of Milton, and am extremely glad you intend to write his life. Almost all the life-writers we have had before Toland and Desmaizeaux are indeed strange insipid creatures ; and yet I had rather read the worst of them, than be obliged to go through with this of Milton’s, or the other’s life of Boileau, where there is such a dull, heavy succession of long quotations of disinteresting passages, that it makes their method quite nauseous. But the verbose, tasteless Frenchman seems to lay it down as a principle, that every life must be a book, and what’s worse, it proves a book without a life ; for what do we know of Boileau, after all his tedious stuff ? You are the only one (and I speak it without a compliment), that by the vigour of your style and sentiments, and the real importance of your materials, have the art (which one would imagine no one could have missed) of adding agreements to the most agreeable subject in the world, which is literary history.<sup>1</sup>

‘Nov. 24, 1737.’

Instead of melting down my materials into one mass, and constantly speaking in my own person, by which I might have appeared to have more merit in the execution of the work, I have resolved to adopt and enlarge upon the excellent plan of Mr. Mason, in his *Memoirs of Gray*. Wherever narrative is necessary to explain, connect, and supply, I furnish it to

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<sup>1</sup> Brit. Mus. 4320, *Ayscough’s Catal. Sloane MSS.*

the best of my abilities; but in the chronological series of Johnson's life, which I trace as distinctly as I can, year by year, I produce, wherever it is in my power, his own minutes, letters, or conversation, being convinced that this mode is more lively, and will make my readers better acquainted with him, than even most of those were who actually knew him, but could know him only partially; whereas there is here an accumulation of intelligence from various points, by which his character is more fully unfolded and illustrated.

Indeed I cannot conceive a more accurate mode of writing any man's life, than to select the most important events of it in his own words, weaving what he privately thought; by which mankind may be enabled to see him live, and to know him, as he actually acted, at the several stages of his life. His character, so gentle and ardent as I have described, is entirely preserved, and it is not necessary that he will be seen in any other manner than as any man who has

And he will be enabled to write, not only of his Life, but of his private not be supposed was, is in the mind of man in the world should be .

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<sup>1</sup> [It is not so, sobriety, to say that into the "History of books falsely entitled

## 6 LIFE OF DR. JOHNSON

him without reserve, I do what he himself recommended, both by his precept and his example :

‘If the biographer writes from personal knowledge, and makes haste to gratify the public curiosity, there is danger lest his interest, his fear, his gratitude, or his tenderness, overpower his fidelity, and tempt him to conceal, if not to invent. There are many who think it an act of piety to hide the faults or failings of their friends, even when they can no longer suffer by their detection ; we therefore see whole ranks

of characters adorned with uniform panegyric, and not to be distinguished from one another but by extrinsic and casual circumstances.

“Let me remember (says Hale), when I find myself in company with a great man, that there is likewise a pity due to his infirmities ; we owe regard to the memory of the great, and respect to be paid to knowledge, to

the peculiar value of the folio edition, and the fact that it contains of Johnson’s works, universally acknowledged to be the most valuable and entertaining ; that I have given upon this subject, and received with so much satisfaction, and found for supposing that it is not more ample

of a great man, if his edition, will best be established by a new edition, shaken by a new edition of *Memoirs of Johnson*, literally no more, do not think of the depreciation of

what is universally esteemed, because it was not to be found in the immediate object of the ingenious writer's pen ; for, in truth, from a man so still and so tame, as to be contented to pass many years as the domestic companion of a superannuated lord and lady, conversation could no more be expected than from a Chinese mandarin on a chimney-piece, or the fantastic figures on a gilt leather screen.

If authority be required, let us appeal to Plutarch, the prince of ancient biographers. Οὔτε ταῖς ἐπιφανεστάταις πράξεσι πάντως ἔνεστι δῆλῳσις ἀρετῆς ἢ κακίας, ἀλλὰ πρᾶγμα βραχὺ πολλάκις, καὶ ῥῆμα, καὶ παιδιὰ τις, ἔμφασιν ἥθους ἐποίησεν μᾶλλον, ἢ μάχαι μυριόνεκροι, παρατάξεις αἱ μέγισται, καὶ πολιορκία πόλεων. 'Nor is it always in the most distinguished achievements that men's virtues or vices may be best discerned ; but very often an action of small note, a short saying, or a jest, shall distinguish a person's real character more than the greatest sieges, or the most important battles.'<sup>1</sup>

To this may be added the sentiments of the very man whose life I am about to exhibit :

'The business of the biographer is often to pass slightly over those performances and incidents which produce vulgar greatness, to lead the thoughts into domestic privacies, and display the minute details of daily life, where exterior appendages are cast aside, and men excel each other only by prudence and by virtue. The account of Thuanus is with great propriety said by its author to have been written that it might lay open to posterity the private and familiar character of that man, *cujus ingenium et candorem ex ipsius scriptis sunt olim semper miraturi*, whose candour and genius will to the end of time be by his writings preserved in admiration.

'There are many invisible circumstances, which, whether

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<sup>1</sup> Plutarch's *Life of Alexander*, init.—Langhorne's translation.

we read as inquirers after natural or moral knowledge, whether we intend to enlarge our science or increase our virtue, are more important than public occurrences. Thus Sallust, the great master of nature, has not forgot in his account of Catiline to remark, that his walk was now quick, and again slow, as an indication of a mind revolving with violent commotion. Thus the story of Melanchthon affords a striking lecture on the value of time, by informing us, that when he had made an appointment, he expected not only the hour but the minute to be fixed, that the day might not run out in the idleness of suspense ; and all the plans and enterprises of De Witt are now of less importance to the world than that part of his personal character, which represents him as careful of his health, and negligent of his life.

‘But biography has often been allotted to writers, who seem very little acquainted with the nature of their task, or very negligent about the performance. They rarely afford any other account than might be collected from public papers, but imagine themselves writing a life, when they exhibit a chronological series of actions or preferments ; and have so little regard to the manners or behaviour of their heroes, that more knowledge may be gained of a man’s real character, by a short conversation with one of his servants, than from a formal and studied narrative, begun with his pedigree, and ended with his funeral.

‘There are, indeed, some natural reasons why these narratives are often written by such as were not likely to give much instruction or delight, and why most accounts of particular persons are barren and useless. If a life be delayed till interest and envy are at an end, we may hope for impartiality, but must expect little intelligence ; for the incidents which give excellence to biography are of a volatile and evanescent kind, such as soon escape the memory, and are rarely transmitted by tradition. We know how few can portray a living acquaintance, except by his most prominent and observable particularities, and the grosser features of his mind ; and it may be easily imagined how much of this little knowledge may be lost in imparting it, and how soon a succession of copies will lose all resemblance of the original.’<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Rambler*, No. 60.

I am fully aware of the objections which may be made to the minuteness on some occasions of my detail of Johnson's conversation, and how happily it is adapted for the petty exercise of ridicule by men of superficial understanding and ludicrous fancy: but I remain firm and confident in my opinion that minute particulars are frequently characteristic, and always amusing, when they relate to a distinguished man. I am therefore exceedingly unwilling that anything, however slight, which my illustrious friend thought it worth his while to express with any degree of point should perish. For this almost superstitious reverence, I have found very old and venerable authority, quoted by our great modern prelate, Secker, in whose tenth sermon there is the following passage:

'*Rabbi David Kimchi*, a noted Jewish commentator, who lived about five hundred years ago, explains that passage in the first Psalm, *His leaf also shall not wither*, from Rabbins yet older than himself, thus: That *even the idle talk*, so he expresses it, *of a good man ought to be regarded*; the most superfluous things he saith are always of some value. And other ancient authors have the same phrase, nearly in the same sense.'

Of one thing I am certain, that considering how highly the small portion which we have of the table-talk and other anecdotes of our celebrated writers is valued, and how earnestly it is regretted that we have not more, I am justified in preserving rather too many of Johnson's sayings than too few, especially as from the diversity of dispositions it cannot be known with certainty beforehand whether what may seem trifling to some, and perhaps to the collector himself, may not be most agreeable to many; and the greater number

that an author can please in any degree, the more pleasure does there arise to a benevolent mind.

To those who are weak enough to think this a degrading task, and the time and labour which have been devoted to it misemployed, I shall content myself with opposing the authority of the greatest man of any age, Julius Cæsar, of whom Bacon observes that 'in his book of Apophthegms which he collected we see that he esteemed it more honour to make himself but a pair of tables, to take the wise and pithy words of others, than to have every word of his own to be made an apophthegm or an oracle.'<sup>1</sup>

Having said thus much by way of introduction, I commit the following pages to the candour of the public.

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SAMUEL JOHNSON was born at Lichfield, in Staffordshire, on the 18th of September, N.S. 1709; and his initiation into the Christian Church was not delayed; for his baptism is recorded in the register of St. Mary's parish in that city, to have been performed on the day of his birth: his father is there styled Gentleman, a circumstance of which an ignorant panegyrist has praised him for not being proud, when the truth is that the appellation of Gentleman, though now lost in the indiscriminate assumption of Esquire, was commonly taken by those who could not boast of gentility. His father was Michael Johnson, a native of Derbyshire, of obscure extraction, who settled in Lichfield as a bookseller and stationer. His mother was Sarah Ford, descended from an ancient race of substantial yeomanry in Warwickshire. They were well advanced

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<sup>1</sup> Bacon's *Advancement of Learning*, Book 1.



in years when they married, and never had more than two children, both sons ; Samuel, their first-born, who lived to be the illustrious character whose various excellence I am to endeavour to record, and Nathanael, who died in his twenty-fifth year.<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Michael Johnson was a man of a large and robust body, and of a strong and active mind ; yet, as in the most solid rocks veins of unsound substance are often discovered, there was in him a mixture of that disease, the nature of which eludes the most minute inquiry, though the effects are well known to be a weariness of life, an unconcern about those things which agitate the greater part of mankind, and a general sensation of gloomy wretchedness. From him then his son inherited, with some other qualities, ‘a vile melancholy,’ which in his too strong expression of any disturbance of the mind, ‘made him mad all his life, at least not sober.’<sup>2</sup> Michael was, however, forced by the narrowness of his circumstances to be very diligent in business, not only in his shop, but by occasionally resorting to several towns in the neighbourhood,<sup>3</sup> some of which were at a considerable

<sup>1</sup> [Nathanael was born in 1712, and died in 1737. Their father, Michael Johnson, was born at Cubley, in Derbyshire, in 1656, and died at Lichfield in 1731, at the age of seventy-six. Sarah Ford, his wife, was born at King’s-Norton,\* in the county of Warwick, in 1669, and died at Lichfield in January 1759, in her ninetieth year.—M.]

<sup>2</sup> *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides*, 3rd ed., p. 213.

<sup>3</sup> Extract of a letter, dated ‘Trentham, St. Peter’s day, 1716,’ written by the Rev. George Plaxton, chaplain at that time to Lord Gower, which may serve to show the high estimation in which the father of our great moralist was held :—‘Johnson, the Lichfield librarian, is now here ; he propagates learning all over this diocese, and advanceth knowledge to its just height ; all the clergy here are his pupils, and suck all they have from him ; Allen cannot make a warrant without his precedent, nor our quondam John Evans draw a recognisance *sine directione Michaelis*.’—*Gentleman’s Magazine*, Oct. 1791.

\* King’s-Norton is here stated to be in Warwickshire, on the authority of Dr. Johnson (see his inscription for his mother’s tomb), but it is in Worcestershire, probably on the confines of the county of Warwick.

distance from Lichfield. At that time booksellers' shops, in the provincial towns of England, were very rare ; so that there was not one even in Birmingham, in which town old Mr. Johnson used to open a shop every market-day. He was a pretty good Latin scholar, and a citizen so creditable as to be made one of the magistrates of Lichfield ; and being a man of good sense, and skill in his trade, he acquired a reasonable share of wealth, of which, however, he afterwards lost the greatest part, by engaging unsuccessfully in a manufacture of parchment. He was a zealous high-churchman and royalist, and retained his attachment to the unfortunate house of Stuart, though he reconciled himself, by casuistical arguments of expediency and necessity, to take the oaths imposed by the prevailing power.

There is a circumstance in his life somewhat romantic, but so well authenticated, that I shall not omit it. A young woman of Leek in Staffordshire, while he served his apprenticeship there, conceived a violent passion for him ; and though it met with no favourable return, followed him to Lichfield, where she took lodgings opposite to the house in which he lived, and indulged her hopeless flame. When he was informed that it so preyed upon her mind that her life was in danger, he with a generous humanity went to her and offered to marry her, but it was then too late : her vital power was exhausted ; and she actually exhibited one of the very rare instances of dying for love. She was buried in the cathedral of Lichfield ; and he, with a tender regard, placed a stone over her grave with this inscription :

Here lies the body of  
 Mrs. ELIZABETH BLANEY, a stranger ;  
 She departed this life  
 20th of September 1694.

Johnson's mother was a woman of distinguished understanding.<sup>1</sup> I asked his old schoolfellow, Mr. Hector, surgeon, of Birmingham, if she was not vain of her son. He said, 'She had too much good sense to be vain, but she knew her son's value.' Her piety was not inferior to her understanding; and to her must be ascribed those early impressions of religion upon the mind of her son, from which the world afterwards derived so much benefit. He told me that he remembered distinctly having had the first notice of Heaven, 'a place to which good people went,' and Hell, 'a place to which bad people went,' communicated to him by her, when a little child in bed with her; and that it might be the better fixed in his memory, she sent him to repeat it to Thomas Jackson, their man-servant; he not being in the way, this was

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<sup>1</sup> [It was not, however, much cultivated, as we may collect from Dr. Johnson's own account of his early years, published by R. Phillips, 8vo, 1805, a work undoubtedly authentic, and which, though short, is curious and well worthy of perusal. 'My father and mother (says Johnson) had not much happiness from each other. They seldom conversed, for my father could not bear to talk of his affairs, and my mother, *being unacquainted with books*, cared not to talk of anything else. Had my mother been more literate, they had been better companions. She might have sometimes introduced her unwelcome topic with more success if she could have diversified her conversation. Of business she had no distinct conception, and therefore her discourse was composed only of complaint, fear, and suspicion. Neither of them ever tried to calculate the profits of trade or the expenses of living. My mother concluded that we were poor because we lost by some of our trades, but the truth was that my father, having in the early part of his life contracted debts, never had trade sufficient to enable him to pay them and to maintain his family: he got something, but not enough. It was not till about 1768 that I thought to calculate the returns of my father's trade, and, by that estimate, his probable profits. This, I believe, my parents never did.'—M.]

not done ; but there was no occasion for any artificial aid for its preservation.

In following so very eminent a man from his cradle to his grave, every minute particular which can throw light on the progress of his mind is interesting. That he was remarkable even in his earliest years may easily be supposed ; for to use his own words in his *Life* of Sydenham, ‘That the strength of his understanding, the accuracy of his discernment, and the ardour of his curiosity, might have been remarked from his infancy by a diligent observer there is no reason to doubt ; for there is no instance of any man whose history has been minutely related that did not in every part of life discover the same proportion of intellectual vigour.’

In all such investigations it is certainly unwise to pay too much attention to incidents which the credulous relate with eager satisfaction and the more scrupulous or witty inquirer considers only as topics of ridicule ; yet there is a traditional story of the infant Hercules of toryism, so curiously characteristic that I shall not withhold it. It was communicated to me in a letter from Miss Mary Ady of Lichfield :

‘When Dr. Sacheverel was at Lichfield, Johnson was not quite three years old. My grandfather Hammond observed him at the cathedral perched upon his father’s shoulders, listening and gaping at the much celebrated preacher. Mr. Hammond asked Mr. Johnson how he could possibly think of bringing such an infant to church, and in the midst of so great a crowd. He answered because it was impossible to keep him at home, for, young as he was, he believed he had caught the public spirit and zeal for Sacheverel, and would have stayed for ever in the church, satisfied with beholding him.’





*Lucy Porter*

Nor can I omit a little instance of that jealous independence of spirit and impetuosity of temper which never forsook him. The fact was acknowledged to me by himself, upon the authority of his mother. One day when the servant who used to be sent to school to conduct him home had not come in time, he set out by himself, though he was then so near-sighted that he was obliged to stoop down on his hands and knees to take a view of the kennel before he ventured to step over it. His schoolmistress, afraid that he might miss his way, or fall into the kennel, or be run over by a cart, followed him at some distance. He happened to turn about and perceive her. Feeling her careful attention as an insult to his manliness, he ran back to her in a rage, and beat her as well as his strength would permit.

Of the power of his memory, for which he was all his life eminent to a degree almost incredible, the following early instance was told me in his presence at Lichfield, in 1776, by his step-daughter, Mrs. Lucy Porter, as related to her by his mother. When he was a child in petticoats, and had learnt to read, Mrs. Johnson one morning put the Common Prayer Book into his hands, pointed to the collect for the day, and said, 'Sam, you must get this by heart.' She went upstairs, leaving him to study it; but by the time she had reached the second floor, she heard him following her. 'What's the matter?' said she. 'I can say it,' he replied; and repeated it distinctly, though he could not have read it more than twice.

But there has been another story of his infant precocity generally circulated, and generally believed, the truth of which I am to refute upon his own

authority. It is told<sup>1</sup> that, when a child of three years old, he chanced to tread upon a duckling, the eleventh of a brood, and killed it; upon which, it is said, he dictated to his mother the following epitaph:

‘Here lies good master duck,  
Whom Samuel Johnson trod on;  
If it had lived, it had been *good luck*,  
For then we’d had an *odd one*.’

There is surely internal evidence that this little composition combines in it what no child of three years old could produce, without an extension of its faculties by immediate inspiration; yet Mrs. Lucy Porter, Dr. Johnson’s step-daughter, positively maintained to me, in his presence, that there could be no doubt of the truth of this anecdote, for, she had heard it from his mother. So difficult is it to obtain an authentic relation of facts, and such authority may there be for error; for he assured me, that his father made the verses, and wished to pass them for his child’s. He added, ‘My father was a foolish old man; that is to say, foolish in talking of his children.’<sup>2</sup>

Young Johnson had the misfortune to be much

<sup>1</sup> *Anecdotes of Dr. Johnson*, by Hester Lynch Piozzi. *Life of Dr. Johnson*, by Sir John Hawkins, p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> This anecdote of the duck, though disproved by internal and external evidence, has nevertheless, upon supposition of its truth, been made the foundation of the following ingenious and fanciful reflections of Miss Seward, amongst the communications concerning Dr. Johnson with which she has been pleased to favour me:—

‘These infant numbers contain the seeds of those propensities which through his life so strongly marked his character, of that poetic talent which afterwards bore such rich and plentiful fruits; for, excepting his orthographic works, everything which Dr. Johnson wrote was poetry, whose essence consists, not in numbers, or in jingle, but in the strength and glow of a fancy, to which all the stores of nature and of art stand in prompt administration, and in an eloquence which conveys their blended illustrations in a language “more tuneable than needs or rhyme or verse to add more harmony.”

‘The above little verses also show that superstitious bias which “grew with his growth, and strengthened with his strength,” and of late years particularly, injured his happiness by presenting to him



afflicted with the scrofula, or king's evil, which disfigured a countenance naturally well formed, and hurt his visual nerves so much, that he did not see at all with one of his eyes, though its appearance was little different from that of the other. There is amongst his prayers one inscribed, '*When my EYE was restored to its use,*'<sup>1</sup> which ascertains a defect that many of his friends knew he had, though I never perceived it.<sup>2</sup> I supposed him to be only near-sighted; and indeed I must observe, that in no other respect could I discern any defect in his vision; on the contrary, the force of his attention and perceptive quickness made him see and distinguish all manner of objects, whether of nature or of art, with a nicety that is rarely to be found. When he and I were travelling in the Highlands of Scotland, and I pointed out to him a mountain which I observed resembled a cone, he corrected my inaccuracy, by showing me, that it was indeed pointed at-the top, but that one side of it was larger than the other. And the ladies with whom he was acquainted agree that no man was more nicely and minutely critical in the elegance of female dress. When I found that he saw the romantic beauties of Islam, in Derbyshire, much better than I did, I told him that he resembled an able performer upon a bad instrument. How false and contemptible, then, are all the remarks which have been made to the prejudice either of his candour or of his philosophy, founded upon a

the gloomy side of religion, rather than that bright and cheering one which gilds the period of closing life with the light of pious hope.'

This is so beautifully imagined, that I would not suppress it. But like many other theories, it is deduced from a supposed fact, which is indeed a fiction.

<sup>1</sup> *Prayers and Meditations*, p. 27.

<sup>2</sup> [Speaking himself of the imperfection of one of his eyes, he said to Dr. Burney, 'the dog was never good for much.']

supposition that he was almost blind! It has been said that he contracted this grievous malady from his nurse.<sup>1</sup> His mother, yielding to the superstitious notion which, it is wonderful to think, prevailed so long in this country, as to the virtue of the regal touch—a notion which our kings encouraged, and to which a man of such inquiry and such judgment as Carte could give credit—carried him to London, where he was actually touched by Queen Anne.<sup>2</sup> Mrs. Johnson indeed, as Mr. Hector informed me, acted by the advice of the celebrated Sir John Floyer, then a physician in Lichfield. Johnson used to talk of this very frankly; and Mrs. Piozzi has preserved his very picturesque description of the scene, as it remained upon his fancy. Being asked if he could remember Queen Anne,—‘He had (he said) a confused, but somehow a sort of solemn recollection of a lady in diamonds, and a long black hood.’<sup>3</sup> This touch, however, was without any effect. I ventured to say to him, in allusion to the political principles in which he was educated, and of which he ever retained some odour, that ‘his mother had not carried him far enough, she should have taken him to Rome.’<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [Such was the opinion of Dr. Swinfen. Johnson's eyes were very soon discovered to be bad, and to relieve them, an issue was cut in his left arm. At the end of ten weeks from his birth, he was taken home from his nurse, ‘a poor diseased infant, almost blind.’ See a work, already quoted, entitled, *An Account of the Life of Dr. Samuel Johnson, from his birth to his eleventh year; written by himself.* 8vo. 1805.—M.]

<sup>2</sup> [He was only thirty months old when he was taken to London to be touched for the evil. During this visit, he tells us, his mother purchased for him a small silver cup and spoon. ‘The cup,’ he affectingly adds, ‘was one of the last pieces of plate which dear Tetty sold in our distress. I have now the spoon. She bought at the same time two tea-spoons, and till my manhood, she had no more.’ *Ibid.*—M.]

<sup>3</sup> *Anecdotes.*

<sup>4</sup> [Queen Anne was the last of our sovereigns who touched, though the service was printed in the Book of Common Prayer as late as 1719.—A. B.]

He was first taught to read English by Dame Oliver, a widow, who kept a school for young children in Lichfield. He told me she could read the black letter, and asked him to borrow for her, from his father, a Bible in that character. When he was going to Oxford, she came to take leave of him, brought him, in the simplicity of her kindness, a present of gingerbread, and said he was the best scholar she ever had. He delighted in mentioning this early compliment, adding, with a smile, that 'this was as high a proof of his merit as he could conceive.' His next instructor in English was a master whom, when he spoke of him to me, he familiarly called Tom Brown, who, said he, 'published a spelling-book, and dedicated it to the UNIVERSE; but I fear no copy of it can now be had.'

He began to learn Latin with Mr. Hawkins, usher, or under-master of Lichfield school, 'a man (said he) very skilful in his little way.' With him he continued two years, and then rose to be under the care of Mr. Hunter, the head-master, who, according to his account, 'was very severe, and wrong-headedly severe. He used (said he) to beat us unmercifully; and he did not distinguish between ignorance and negligence; for he would beat a boy equally for not knowing a thing, as for neglecting to know it. He would ask a boy a question, and if he did not answer it, he would beat him, without considering whether he had an opportunity of knowing how to answer it. For instance, he would call up a boy and ask him Latin for a candlestick, which the boy could not expect to be asked. Now, sir, if a boy could answer every question, there would be no need of a master to teach him.'

It is, however, but justice to the memory of Mr. Hunter to mention, that though he might err in being too severe, the school of Lichfield was very respectable in his time. The late Dr. Taylor, Prebendary of Westminster, who was educated under him, told me that 'he was an excellent master, and that his ushers were most of them men of eminence; that Holbrook, one of the most ingenious men, best scholars, and best preachers of his age, was usher during the greatest part of the time that Johnson was at school. Then came Hague, of whom as much might be said, with the addition that he was an elegant poet. Hague was succeeded by Green, afterwards Bishop of Lincoln, whose character in the learned world is well known. In the same form with Johnson was Congreve, who afterwards became chaplain to Archbishop Boulter, and by that connection obtained good preferment in Ireland. He was a younger son of the ancient family of Congreve, in Staffordshire, of which the poet was a branch. His brother sold the estate. There was also Lowe, afterwards Canon of Windsor.'

Indeed Johnson was very sensible how much he owed to Mr. Hunter. Mr. Langton one day asked him how he had acquired so accurate a knowledge of Latin, in which, I believe, he was exceeded by no man of his time; he said, 'My master whipped me very well. Without that, sir, I should have done nothing.' He told Mr. Langton, that while Hunter was flogging his boys unmercifully, he used to say, 'And this I do to save you from the gallows.' Johnson, upon all occasions, expressed his approbation of enforcing instruction by means of the

rod.<sup>1</sup> 'I would rather (said he) have the rod to be the general terror to all, to make them learn, than tell a child, if you do thus, or thus, you will be more esteemed than your brothers or sisters. The rod produces an effect which terminates in itself. A child is afraid of being whipped, and gets his task, and there's an end on't; whereas, by exciting emulation and comparisons of superiority, you lay the foundation of lasting mischief; you make brothers and sisters hate each other.'

When Johnson saw some young ladies in Lincolnshire who were remarkably well behaved, owing to their mother's strict discipline and severe correction, he exclaimed, in one of Shakespeare's lines a little varied,<sup>2</sup>

'*Rod*, I will honour thee for this thy duty.'

That superiority over his fellows, which he maintained with so much dignity in his march through life, was not assumed from vanity and ostentation, but was the natural and constant effect of those extraordinary powers of mind, of which he could not but be conscious by comparison; the intellectual difference, which in other cases of comparison of characters, is often a matter of undecided contest, being as clear in his case as the superiority of stature in some men above others. Johnson did not strut or stand on tip-toe; he only did not stoop. From his earliest years his superiority was perceived and acknowledged. He

<sup>1</sup> [Johnson's observations to Dr. Rose on this subject may be found in a subsequent part of this work. See vol. ii. near the end of the year 1775.—BURNBY.]

<sup>2</sup> [More than a little. The line is in *King Henry VI.*, Part ii. Act iv. Sc. last :

'Sword, I will hallow thee for this thy deed.'—M.]

was from the beginning *ἀναξ ἀνδρῶν*, a king of men. His schoolfellow, Mr. Hector, has obligingly furnished me with many particulars of his boyish days; and assured me that he never knew him corrected at school, but for talking and diverting other boys from their business. He seemed to learn by intuition, for though indolence and procrastination were inherent in his constitution, whenever he made an exertion he did more than any one else. In short, he is a memorable instance of what has been often observed, that the boy is the man in miniature; and that the distinguishing characteristics of each individual are the same through the whole course of life. His favourites used to receive very liberal assistance from him; and such was the submission and deference with which he was treated, such the desire to obtain his regard, that three of the boys, of whom Mr. Hector was sometimes one, used to come in the morning as his humble attendants, and carry him to school. One in the middle stooped, while he sat upon his back, and one on each side supported him; and thus he was borne triumphant. Such a proof of the early predominance of intellectual vigour is very remarkable, and does honour to human nature. Talking to me once himself of his being much distinguished at school, he told me, 'they never thought to raise me by comparing me to any one; they never said Johnson is as good a scholar as such a one; but such a one is as good a scholar as Johnson; and this was said but of one, but of Lowe; and I do not think he was as good a scholar.'

He discovered a great ambition to excel, which roused him to counteract his indolence. He was un-

commonly inquisitive, and his memory was so tenacious that he never forgot anything that he either heard or read. Mr. Hector remembers having recited to him eighteen verses, which, after a little pause, he repeated verbatim, varying only one epithet, by which he improved the line.

He never joined with the other boys in their ordinary diversions: his only amusement was in winter, when he took a pleasure in being drawn upon the ice by a boy bare-footed, who pulled him along by a garter fixed round him: no very easy operation, as his size was remarkably large. His defective sight, indeed, prevented him from enjoying the common sports; and he once pleasantly remarked to me, 'how wonderfully well he had contrived to be idle without them.' Lord Chesterfield, however, has justly observed in one of his letters, when earnestly cautioning a friend against the pernicious effects of idleness, that active sports are not to be reckoned idleness in young people; and that the listless torpor of doing nothing alone deserves that name. Of this dismal inertness of disposition Johnson had all his life too great a share. Mr. Hector relates, that 'he could not oblige him more than by sauntering away the hours of vacation in the fields, during which he was more engaged in talking to himself than to his companion.'

Dr. Percy, the Bishop of Dromore, who was long intimately acquainted with him, and has preserved a few anecdotes concerning him, regretting that he was not a more diligent collector, informs me that 'when a boy he was immoderately fond of reading romances of chivalry, and he retained his fondness for them through life; so that (adds his lordship) spending

part of a summer at my parsonage-house in the country, he chose for his regular reading the old Spanish romance of *Felixmarte of Hircania*, in folio, which he read quite through. Yet I have heard him attribute to these extravagant fictions that unsettled turn of mind which prevented his ever fixing in any profession.'

After having resided for some time at the house of his uncle,<sup>1</sup> Cornelius Ford, Johnson was, at the age of fifteen, removed to the school of Stourbridge, in Worcestershire, of which Mr. Wentworth was then master. This step was taken by the advice of his cousin, the Rev. Mr. Ford, a man in whom both talents and good dispositions were disgraced by licentiousness,<sup>2</sup> but who was a very able judge of what was right. At this school he did not receive so much benefit as was expected. It has been said that he acted in the capacity of an assistant to Mr. Wentworth in teaching the younger boys. 'Mr. Wentworth (he told me) was a very able man, but an idle man, and to me very severe; but I cannot blame him much. I was then a big boy; he saw I did not reverence him; and that he should get no honour by me. I had brought enough with me to carry me through; and all I should get at his school would be ascribed to my own labour, or to my former master. Yet he taught me a great deal.'

He thus discriminated to Dr. Percy, Bishop of Dromore, his progress at his two grammar-schools. 'At

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<sup>1</sup> [Cornelius Ford, according to Sir John Hawkins, was his cousin-german, being the son of Dr. Joseph Ford, an eminent physician, who was brother to Johnson's mother.—M.]

<sup>2</sup> He is said to be the original of the parson in Hogarth's *Modern Midnight Conversation*.



one, I learned much in the school, but little from the master; in the other, I learned much from the master, but little in the school.'

The bishop also informs me that 'Dr. Johnson's father, before he was received at Stourbridge, applied to have him admitted as a scholar and assistant to the Rev. Samuel Lea, M.A., head-master of Newport school, in Shropshire (a very diligent good teacher, at that time in high reputation, under whom Mr. Hollis is said, in the Memoirs of his Life, to have been also educated).<sup>1</sup> This application to Mr. Lea was not successful; but Johnson had afterwards the gratification to hear that the old gentleman, who lived to a very advanced age, mentioned it as one of the most memorable events of his life, that 'he was *very near* having that great man for his scholar.'

He remained at Stourbridge little more than a year, and then he returned home, where he may be said to have loitered, for two years, in a state very unworthy his uncommon abilities. He had already given several proofs of his poetical genius, both in his school exercises and in other occasional compositions. Of these I have obtained a considerable collection, by the favour of Mr. Wentworth, son of one of his masters, and of Mr. Hector, his schoolfellow and friend, from which I select the following specimens:

*Translation of Virgil. Pastoral 1.*

MELIBŒUS

Now, Tityrus, you, supine and careless laid,  
Play on your pipe beneath this beechen shade;

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<sup>1</sup> As was likewise the Bishop of Dromore many years afterwards.

While wretched we about the world must roam,  
 And leave our pleasing fields and native home,  
 Here at your ease you sing your amorous flame,  
 And the wood rings with Amarillis' name.

## TITYRUS

Those blessings, friend, a deity bestow'd,  
 For I shall never think him less than god :  
 Oft on his altar shall my firstlings lie,  
 Their blood the consecrated stones shall dye :  
 He gave my flocks to graze the flowery meads,  
 And me to tune at ease th' unequal reeds.

## MELIBŒUS

My admiration only I exprest  
 (No spark of envy harbours in my breast),  
 That, when confusion o'er the country reigns,  
 To you alone this happy state remains.  
 Here I, though faint myself, must drive my goats,  
 Far from their ancient fields and humble cots.  
 This scarce I lead, who left on yonder rock  
 Two tender kids, the hopes of all the flock.  
 Had we not been perverse and careless grown,  
 This dire event by omens was foreshown ;  
 Our trees were blasted by the thunder stroke,  
 And left-hand crows, from an old hollow oak,  
 Foretold the coming evil by their dismal croak.

*Translation of Horace.* Book I. Ode xxii.

THE man, my friend, whose conscious heart  
 With virtue's sacred ardour glows,  
 Nor taints with death the evenom'd dart,  
 Nor needs the guard of Moorish bows :  
 Though Scythia's icy cliffs he treads,  
 Or horrid Afric's faithless sands ;  
 Or where the famed Hydaspes spreads  
 His liquid wealth o'er barbarous lands.  
 For while by Chloe's image charm'd,  
 Too far in Sabine woods I stray'd ;  
 Me singing, careless and unarm'd,  
 A grisly wolf surprised, and fled.

No savage more portentous stain'd  
Apulia's spacious wilds with gore ;  
No fiercer Juba's thirsty land,  
Dire nurse of raging lions, bore.

Place me where no soft summer gale  
Among the quivering branches sighs ;  
Where clouds condensed for ever veil  
With horrid gloom the frowning skies :

Place me beneath the burning line,  
A clime denied to human race ;  
I'll sing of Chloe's charms divine,  
Her heavenly voice, and beauteous face.

*Translation of Horace. Book II. Ode ix.*

CLOUDS do not always veil the skies,  
Nor showers immerse the verdant plain ;  
Nor do the billows always rise,  
Or storms afflict the ruffled main :

Nor, Valgius, on th' Armenian shores  
Do the chain'd waters always freeze ;  
Not always furious Boreas roars,  
Or bends with violent force the trees.

But you are ever drown'd in tears,  
For Mystes dead you ever mourn ;  
No setting Sol can ease your cares,  
But finds you sad at his return.

The wise experienced Grecian sage  
Mourn'd not Antiochus so long ;  
Nor did King Priam's hoary age  
So much lament his slaughter'd son.

Leave off, at length, these woman's sighs ;  
Augustus' numerous trophies sing ;  
Repeat that prince's victories,  
To whom all nations tribute bring.

Niphates rolls an humbler wave ;  
 At length the undaunted Scythian yields,  
 Content to live the Romans' slave,  
 And scarce forsakes his native fields.

*Translation of part of the Dialogue between  
 Hector and Andromache ; from the Sixth  
 Book of Homer's Iliad*

SHE ceased ; then godlike Hector answer'd kind  
 (His various plumage sporting in the wind),  
 That post, and all the rest, shall be my care ;  
 But shall I, then, forsake the unfinish'd war ?  
 How would the Trojans brand great Hector's name !  
 And one base action sully all my fame,  
 Acquired by wounds and battles bravely fought !  
 O, how my soul abhors so mean a thought !  
 Long since I learn'd to slight his fleeting breath,  
 And view with cheerful eyes approaching death.  
 The inexorable sisters have decreed  
 That Priam's house, and Priam's self shall bleed :  
 The day will come, in which proud Troy shall yield,  
 And spread its smoking ruins o'er the field.  
 Yet Hecuba's, nor Priam's hoary age,  
 Whose blood shall quench some Grecian's thirsty rage,  
 Nor my brave brothers, that have bit the ground,  
 Their souls dismiss'd through many a ghastly wound,  
 Can in my bosom half that grief create,  
 As the sad thought of your impending fate :  
 When some proud Grecian dame shall tasks impose,  
 Mimic your tears, and ridicule your woes ;  
 Beneath Hyperia's waters shall you sweat,  
 And, fainting, scarce support the liquid weight :  
 Then shall some Argive loud insulting cry,  
 Behold the wife of Hector, guard of Troy !  
 Tears at my name, shall drown those beauteous eyes,  
 And that fair bosom heave with rising sighs !  
 Before that day, by some brave hero's hand  
 May I lie slain, and spurn the bloody sand.

*To a Young Lady on her Birthday*<sup>1</sup>

THIS tributary verse receive, my fair,  
Warm with an ardent lover's fondest prayer.  
May this returning day for ever find  
Thy form more lovely, more adorned thy mind;  
All pains, all cares, may favouring Heaven remove,  
All but the sweet solitudes of love!  
May powerful nature join with grateful art,  
To point each glance, and force it to the heart!  
O then, when conquered crowds confess thy sway,  
When ev'n proud wealth and prouder wit obey,  
My fair, be mindful of the mighty trust:  
Alas! 'tis hard for beauty to be just.  
Those sovereign charms with strictest care employ,  
Nor give the generous pain, the worthless joy:  
With his own form acquaint the forward fool,  
Shown in the faithful glass of ridicule;  
Teach mimic censure her own faults to find,  
No more let coquettes to themselves be blind,  
So shall Belinda's charms improve mankind.

*The Young Author*<sup>2</sup>

WHEN first the peasant, long inclined to roam,  
Forsakes his rural sports and peaceful home,  
Pleased with the scene the smiling ocean yields,  
He scorns the verdant meads and flowery fields;  
Then dances jocund o'er the watery way,  
While the breeze whispers, and the streamers play:  
Unbounded prospects in his bosom roll,  
And future millions lift his rising soul;  
In blissful dreams he digs the golden mine,  
And raptured sees the new-found ruby shine,  
Joys insincere! thick clouds invade the skies,  
Loud roar the billows, high the waves arise:

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<sup>1</sup> Mr. Hector informs me that this was made almost *impromptu* in his presence.

<sup>2</sup> This he inserted, with many alterations, in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1743.

Sick'ning with fear, he longs to view the shore,  
 And vows to trust the faithless deep no more.  
 So the young Author, panting after fame,  
 And the long honours of a lasting name,  
 Intrusts his happiness to human kind,  
 More false, more cruel, than the seas or wind.  
 'Toil on, dull crowd,' in ecstasies he cries,  
 'For wealth or title, perishable prize ;  
 While I those transitory blessings scorn,  
 Secure of praise from ages yet unborn.'  
 This thought once form'd, all counsel comes too late,  
 He flies to press, and hurries on his fate ;  
 Swiftly he sees the imagined laurels spread,  
 And feels the unfading wreath surround his head.  
 Warn'd by another's fate, vain youth, be wise ;  
 Those dreams were Settle's once, and Ogilby's :  
 The pamphlet spreads, incessant hisses rise,  
 To some retreat the baffled writer flies ;  
 Where no sour critics snarl, no sneers molest,  
 Safe from the tart lampoon and stinging jest :  
 There begs of Heaven a less distinguish'd lot,  
 Glad to be hid, and proud to be forgot.

*Epilogue, intended to have been spoken by a Lady  
 who was to personate the Ghost of Hermione*<sup>1</sup>

YE blooming train, who give despair or joy,  
 Bless with a smile, or with a frown destroy ;  
 In whose fair cheeks destructive Cupids wait,  
 And with unerring shafts distribute fate ;  
 Whose snowy breasts, whose animated eyes,  
 Each youth admires, though each admirer dies ;  
 Whilst you deride their pangs in barb'rous play,  
 Unpitying see them weep, and hear them pray,  
 And unrelenting sport ten thousand lives away :  
 For you, ye fair, I quit the gloomy plains,  
 Where sable night in all her horror reigns ;

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<sup>1</sup> Some young ladies at Lichfield having proposed to act *The Distressed Mother*, Johnson wrote this, and gave it to Mr. Hector to convey it privately to them.

No fragrant bowers, no delightful glades,  
Receive the unhappy ghosts of scornful maids.  
For kind, for tender nymphs, the myrtle blooms,  
And weaves her bending boughs in pleasing glooms ;  
Perennial roses deck each purple vale,  
And scents ambrosial breath in every gale :  
Far hence are banish'd vapours, spleen, and tears,  
Tea, scandal, ivory teeth, and languid airs :  
No pug, nor favourite Cupid there enjoys  
The balmy kiss, for which poor Thyrsis dies ;  
Form'd to delight, they use no foreign arms,  
No torturing whalebones pinch them into charms ;  
No conscious blushes there their cheeks inflame,  
For those who feel no guilt can know no shame ;  
Unfaded still their former charms they show,  
Around them pleasures wait, and joys for ever new.  
But cruel virgins meet severer fates ;  
Expell'd and exiled from the blissful seats,  
To dismal realms, and regions void of peace,  
Where furies ever howl, and serpents hiss.  
O'er the sad plains perpetual tempests sigh,  
And poisonous vapours, black'ning all the sky,  
With livid hue the fairest face o'ercast,  
And every beauty withers at the blast :  
Where'er they fly their lovers' ghosts pursue,  
Inflicting all those ills which once they knew ;  
Vexation, Fury, Jealousy, Despair,  
Vex every eye, and every bosom tear ;  
Their foul deformities by all descried,  
No maid to flatter, and no paint to hide.  
Then melt, ye fair, while crowds around you sigh,  
Nor let disdain sit lowering in your eye ;  
With pity soften every awful grace,  
And beauty smile auspicious in each face ;  
To ease their pains exert your milder power,  
So shall you guiltless reign, and all mankind adore.

The two years which he spent at home, after his return from Stourbridge, he passed in what he thought idleness, and was scolded by his father for his want of

steady application. He had no settled plan of life, nor looked forward at all, but merely lived from day to day. Yet he read a great deal in a desultory manner, without any scheme of study, as chance threw books in his way, and inclination directed him through them. He used to mention one curious instance of his casual reading, when but a boy. Having imagined that his brother had hid some apples behind a large folio upon an upper shelf in his father's shop, he climbed up to search for them. There were no apples; but the large folio proved to be Petrarch, whom he had seen mentioned, in some preface, as one of the restorers of learning. His curiosity having been thus excited, he sat down with avidity, and read a great part of the book. What he read during these two years, he told me, was not works of mere amusement, 'not voyages and travels, but all literature, sir, all ancient writers, all manly: though but little Greek, only some of Anacreon and Hesiod: but in this irregular manner (added he) I had looked into a great many books, which were not commonly known at the Universities, where they seldom read any books but what are put into their hands by their tutors, so that when I came to Oxford, Dr. Adams, now master of Pembroke College, told me, I was the best qualified for the University that he had ever known come there.'

In estimating the progress of his mind during these two years, as well as in future periods of his life, we must not regard his own hasty confession of idleness: for we see, when he explains himself, that he was acquiring various stores; and indeed he himself concluded the account with saying, 'I would not have you think I was doing nothing then.' He might,



perhaps, have studied more assiduously ; but it may be doubted, whether such a mind as his was not more enriched by roaming at large in the fields of literature than if it had been confined to any single spot. The analogy between body and mind is very general, and the parallel will hold as to their food, as well as any other particular. The flesh of animals who feed excursively is allowed to have a higher flavour than that of those who are cooped up. May there not be the same difference between men who read as their taste prompts, and men who are confined in cells and colleges to stated tasks ?

That a man in Mr. Michael Johnson's circumstances should think of sending his son to the expensive University of Oxford, at his own charge, seems very improbable. The subject was too delicate to question Johnson upon ; but I have been assured by Dr. Taylor, that the scheme never would have taken place, had not a gentleman of Shropshire, one of his schoolfellows, spontaneously undertaken to support him at Oxford, in the character of his companion : though, in fact, he never received any assistance whatever from that gentleman.

He, however, went to Oxford, and was entered a commoner of Pembroke College, on the 31st of October 1728, being then in his nineteenth year.

The Reverend Dr. Adams, who afterwards presided over Pembroke College with universal esteem, told me he was present, and gave me some account of what passed on the night of Johnson's arrival at Oxford. On that evening, his father, who had anxiously accompanied him, found means to have him introduced to Mr. Jorden, who was to be his tutor. His being

put under any tutor, reminds us of what Wood says of Robert Burton, author of the *Anatomy of Melancholy*, when elected student of Christ Church; 'for form's sake, *though he wanted not a tutor*, he was put under the tuition of Dr. John Bancroft, afterwards Bishop of Oxon.'<sup>1</sup>

His father seemed very full of the merits of his son, and told the company he was a good scholar, and a poet, and wrote Latin verses. His figure and manner appeared strange to them; but he behaved modestly, and sat silent, till upon something which occurred in the course of conversation, he suddenly struck in and quoted Macrobius; and thus he gave the first impression of that more extensive reading in which he had indulged himself.

His tutor, Mr. Jorden, fellow of Pembroke, was not, it seems, a man of such abilities as we should conceive requisite for the instructor of Samuel Johnson, who gave me the following account of him. 'He was a very worthy man, but a heavy man, and I did not profit much by his instructions. Indeed, I did not attend him much. The first day after I came to College, I waited upon him, and then stayed away four. On the sixth, Mr. Jorden asked me why I had not attended. I answered, I had been sliding in Christ Church meadow: and this I said with as much *nonchalance* as I am now<sup>2</sup> talking to you. I had no notion that I was wrong or irreverent to my tutor.' Boswell: 'That, sir, was great fortitude of mind.' Johnson: 'No, sir, stark insensibility.'<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Athen. Oxon.* edit. 1721, i. 627.

<sup>2</sup> Oxford, 20th March 1776.

<sup>3</sup> It ought to be remembered, that Dr. Johnson was apt, in his literary as well as moral exercises, to overcharge his defects. Dr.

The 5th of November was at that time kept with great solemnity at Pembroke College, and exercises upon the subject of the day were required. Johnson neglected to perform his, which is much to be regretted; for his vivacity of imagination, and force of language, would probably have produced something sublime upon the gunpowder plot. To apologise for his neglect, he gave in a short copy of verses, entitled *Somnium*, containing a common thought; 'that the Muse had come to him in his sleep, and whispered, that it did not become him to write on such subjects as politics; he should confine himself to humbler themes': but the versification was truly Virgilian.

He had a love and respect for Jorden, not for his literature, but for his worth. 'Whenever (said he) a young man becomes Jorden's pupil, he becomes his son.'

Having given such a specimen of his poetical powers, he was asked by Mr. Jorden to translate Pope's *Messiah* into Latin verse, as a Christmas exercise. He performed it with uncommon rapidity, and in so masterly a manner, that he obtained great applause from it, which ever after kept him high in the estimation of his College, and, indeed, of all the University.

It is said that Mr. Pope expressed himself concerning it in terms of strong approbation. Dr. Taylor told me that it was first printed for old Mr. Johnson, without the knowledge of his son, who was very angry when he heard of it. A *Miscellany of Poems*, collected by a person of the name of *Husbands*, was published

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Adams informed me, that he attended his tutor's lectures, and also the lectures in the College Hall very regularly.

at Oxford in 1731. In that Miscellany Johnson's translation of the Messiah appeared, with this modest motto from Scaliger's *Poetics* : ' *Ex alieno ingenio poeta, ex suo tantum versificator.*'

I am not ignorant that critical objections have been made to this and other specimens of Johnson's Latin poetry. I acknowledge myself not competent to decide on a question of such extreme nicety. But I am satisfied with the just and discriminative eulogy pronounced upon it by my friend Mr. Courtenay :

' And with like ease his vivid lines assume  
The garb of dignity of ancient Rome.—  
Let college *verse-men* trite conceits express,  
Trick'd out in splendid shreds of Virgil's dress ;  
From playful Ovid cull the tinsel phrase,  
And vapid notions hitch in pilfer'd lays ;  
Then with mosaic art the piece combine,  
And boast the glitter of each dulcet line ;  
Johnson adventured boldly to transfuse  
His vigorous sense into the Latin Muse ;  
Aspired to shine by unreflected light,  
And with a Roman's ardour *think* and *write* ;  
He felt the tuneful Nine his breast inspire,  
And, like a master, waked the soothing lyre :  
Horatian strains a grateful heart proclaim,  
While Sky's wild rocks resound his Thralia's name.—  
Hesperia's plant, in some less skilful hands,  
To bloom a while, factitious heat demands :  
Though glowing Maro a faint warmth supplies,  
The sickly blossom in the hot-house dies :  
By Johnson's genial culture, art, and toil,  
Its root strikes deep, and owns the fost'ring soil ;  
Imbibes our sun through all its swelling veins,  
And grows a native of Britannia's plains.'<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Poetical Review of the Literary and Moral Character of Dr. Johnson*, by John Courtenay, Esq., M.P.

The 'morbid melancholy' which was lurking in his constitution, and to which we may ascribe those particularities and that aversion to regular life which at a very early period marked his character, gathered such strength in his twentieth year as to afflict him in a dreadful manner. While he was at Lichfield, in the college vacation of the year 1729, he felt himself overwhelmed with a horrible hypochondria, with perpetual irritation, fretfulness, and impatience, and with a dejection, gloom, and despair which made existence misery. From this dismal malady he never afterwards was perfectly relieved, and all his labours and all his enjoyments were but temporary interruptions of its baleful influence. How wonderful, how unsearchable are the ways of God! Johnson, who was blessed with all the powers of genius and understanding in a degree far above the ordinary state of human nature, was at the same time visited with a disorder so afflictive that they who know it by dire experience will not envy his exalted endowments. That it was in some degree occasioned by a defect in his nervous system, that inexplicable part of our frame, appears highly probable. He told Mr. Paradise that he was sometimes so languid and inefficient that he could not distinguish the hour upon the town-clock.

Johnson, upon the first violent attack of this disorder, strove to overcome it by forcible exertions. He frequently walked to Birmingham and back again, and tried many other expedients, but all in vain. His expression concerning it to me was, 'I did not then know how to manage it.' His distress became so intolerable that he applied to Dr. Swinfen, physi-

cian in Lichfield, his godfather, and put into his hands a state of his case, written in Latin. Dr. Swinfen was so much struck with the extraordinary acuteness, research, and eloquence of this paper, that, in his zeal for his godson, he showed it to several people. His daughter, Mrs. Desmoulins, who was many years humanely supported in Dr. Johnson's house in London, told me that upon his discovering that Dr. Swinfen had communicated his case, he was so much offended that he was never afterwards fully reconciled to him. He indeed had good reason to be offended, for though Dr. Swinfen's motive was good, he inconsiderately betrayed a matter deeply interesting and of great delicacy which had been intrusted to him in confidence, and exposed a complaint of his young friend and patient which, in the superficial opinion of the generality of mankind, is attended with contempt and disgrace.

But let not little men triumph upon knowing that Johnson was an hypochondriac, was subject to what the learned, philosophical, and pious Dr. Cheyne has so well treated under the title of 'The English Malady.' Though he suffered severely from it, he was not therefore degraded. The powers of his great mind might be troubled, and their full exercise suspended at times, but the mind itself was ever entire. As a proof of this it is only necessary to consider that, when he was at the very worst he composed that state of his own case, which showed an uncommon vigour, not only of fancy and taste, but of judgment. I am aware that he himself was too ready to call such a complaint by the name of *madness*; in conformity with which notion he has traced its gradations, with

exquisite nicety, in one of the chapters of his *Rasselas*. But there is surely a clear distinction between a disorder which affects only the imagination and spirits, while the judgment is sound, and a disorder by which the judgment itself is impaired. This distinction was made to me by the late Professor Gaubius of Leyden, physician to the Prince of Orange, in a conversation which I had with him several years ago; and he expounded it thus: ‘If (said he) a man tells me that he is grievously disturbed, for that he *imagines* he sees a ruffian coming against him with a drawn sword, though at the same time he is *conscious* it is a delusion, I pronounce him to have a disordered imagination, but if a man tells me that he *sees* this, and in consternation calls me to look at it, I pronounce him to be *mad*.’

It is a common effect of low spirits or melancholy to make those who are afflicted with it imagine that they are actually suffering those evils which happen to be most strongly presented to their minds. Some have fancied themselves to be deprived of the use of their limbs, some to labour under acute diseases, others to be in extreme poverty, when, in truth, there was not the least reality in any of the suppositions, so that when the vapours were dispelled they were convinced of the delusion. To Johnson, whose supreme enjoyment was the exercise of his reason, the disturbance or obscuration of that faculty was the evil most to be dreaded. Insanity, therefore, was the object of his most dismal apprehension, and he fancied himself seized by it or approaching to it at the very time when he was giving proofs of a more than ordinary soundness and vigour of judgment. That

his own diseased imagination should have so far deceived him is strange, but it is stranger still that some of his friends should have given credit to his groundless opinion when they had such undoubted proofs that it was totally fallacious, though it is by no means surprising that those who wish to depreciate him should, since his death, have laid hold of this circumstance and insisted upon it with very unfair aggravation.

Amidst the oppression and distraction of a disease which very few have felt in its full extent, but many have experienced in a slighter degree, Johnson in his writings and in his conversation never failed to display all the varieties of intellectual excellence. In his march through this world to a better, his mind still appeared grand and brilliant, and impressed all around him with the truth of Virgil's noble sentiment—

‘*Ignæus est ollis vigor, et cœlestis origo.*’—*Æn.* vi. 730.

The history of his mind as to religion is an important article. I have mentioned the early impressions made upon his tender imagination by his mother, who continued her pious cares with assiduity, but, in his opinion, not with judgment. ‘Sunday (said he) was a heavy day with me when I was a boy. My mother confined me on that day, and made me read *The Whole Duty of Man*, from a great part of which I could derive no instruction. When, for instance, I had read the chapter on theft, which from my infancy I had been taught was wrong, I was no more convinced that theft was wrong than before, so there was no accession of knowledge. A boy should be introduced to such books by having his attention directed to the



arrangement, to the style, and other excellences of composition, that the mind being thus engaged by an amusing variety of objects may not grow weary.'

He communicated to me the following particulars upon the subject of his religious progress. 'I fell into an inattention to religion, or an indifference about it, in my ninth year. The church at Lichfield, in which we had a seat, wanted reparation, so I was to go and find a seat in other churches; and having bad eyes, and being awkward about this, I used to go and read in the fields on Sunday. This habit continued till my fourteenth year, and still I find a great reluctance to go to church. I then became a sort of lax *talker* against religion, for I did not much *think* against it, and this lasted till I went to Oxford, where it would not be *suffered*. When at Oxford I took up Law's *Serious Call to a Holy Life*, expecting to find it a dull book (as such books generally are), and perhaps to laugh at it. But I found Law quite an overmatch for me, and this was the first occasion of my thinking in earnest of religion after I became capable of rational inquiry.'<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Piozzi has given a strange fantastical account of the original of Dr. Johnson's belief in our most holy religion. 'At the age of *ten* years his mind was disturbed by scruples of infidelity, which preyed upon his spirits and made him very uneasy, the more so as he revealed his uneasiness to none, being naturally, as he said, of a sullen temper and reserved disposition. He searched, however, diligently but fruitlessly for evidences of the truth of revelation, and at length *recollecting* a book he had *once* seen [*I suppose at five years old*] in his father's shop, entitled, *De Veritate Religionis, etc.*, he began to think himself *highly culpable* for neglecting such a means of information, and took himself severely to task for this *sin*, adding many acts of voluntary and, to others, unknown *penance*. The first opportunity which offered, of course, he seized the book with avidity, but, on examination, *not finding himself scholar enough to peruse its contents*, set his heart at rest, and not thinking to inquire whether there were any English books written on the subject, followed his usual amusements, and *considered his conscience as lightened of a crime*. He redoubled his diligence to learn

From this time forward religion was the predominant object of his thoughts, though, with the just sentiments of a conscientious Christian, he lamented that his practice of its duties fell far short of what it ought to be.

This instance of a mind such as that of Johnson being first disposed, by an unexpected incident, to think with anxiety of the momentous concerns of eternity and of 'what he should do to be saved,' may for ever be produced in opposition to the superficial and sometimes profane contempt that has been thrown upon those occasional impressions which it is certain many Christians have experienced, though it must be acknowledged that weak minds, from an erroneous supposition that no man is in a state of grace who has not felt a particular conversion, have, in some cases, brought a degree of ridicule upon them—a ridicule of which it is inconsiderate or unfair to make a general application.

How seriously Johnson was impressed with a sense of religion, even in the vigour of his youth, appears from the following passage in his minutes, kept by way of diary: 'Sept. 7, 1736. I have this day entered upon my twenty-eighth year. Mayest thou, O God, enable

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the language that contained the information he most wished for, but from the pain which *guilt* [namely, *having omitted to read what he did not understand*] had given him, he now began to deduce the soul's immortality [*a sensation of pain in this world being an unquestionable proof of existence in another*], which was the point that belief first stopped at, and from that moment *resolving to be a Christian*, became one of the most zealous and pious ones our nation ever produced.'—*Anecdotes*.

This is one of the numerous misrepresentations of this lively lady which it is worth while to correct; for if credit should be given to such a childish, irrational, and ridiculous statement of the foundation of Dr. Johnson's faith in Christianity, how little credit would be due to it! Mrs. Piozzi seems to wish that the world should think Dr. Johnson also under the influence of that easy logic, *Stet pro ratione voluntas*.

me, for Jesus Christ's sake, to spend this in such a manner that I may receive comfort from it at the hour of death and in the day of judgment ! Amen.'

The particular course of his reading while at Oxford and during the time of vacation which he passed at home cannot be traced. Enough has been said of his irregular mode of study. He told me that from his earliest years he loved to read poetry, but hardly ever read any poem to an end ; that he read Shakespeare at a period so early that the speech of the Ghost in Hamlet terrified him when he was alone ; that Horace's *Odes* were the compositions in which he took most delight, and it was long before he liked his *Epistles* and *Satires*. He told me what he read *solidly* at Oxford was Greek—not the Grecian historians, but Homer and Euripides, and now and then a little Epigram ; that the study of which he was the most fond was Metaphysics, but he had not read much even in that way. I always thought that he did himself injustice in his account of what he had read, and that he must have been speaking with reference to the vast portion of study which is possible, and to which few scholars in the whole history of literature have attained ; for when I once asked him whether a person whose name I have now forgotten studied hard, he answered, 'No, sir ; I do not believe he studied hard. I never knew a man who studied hard. I conclude, indeed, from the effects that some men have studied hard, as Bentley and Clarke.' Trying him by that criterion upon which he formed his judgment of others, we may be absolutely certain, both from his writings and his conversation, that his reading was very extensive. Dr. Adam Smith, than whom few were better

judges on this subject, once observed to me that 'Johnson knew more books than any man alive.' He had a peculiar facility in seizing at once what was valuable in any book without submitting to the labour of perusing it from beginning to end. He had, from the irritability of his constitution at all times, an impatience and hurry when he either read or wrote. A certain apprehension arising from novelty made him write his first exercise at College twice over, but he never took that trouble with any other composition, and we shall see that his most excellent works were struck off at a heat, with rapid exertion.<sup>1</sup>

Yet he appears, from his early notes or memorandums in my possession, to have at various times attempted, or at least planned, a methodical course of study, according to computation, of which he was all his life fond, as it fixed his attention steadily upon something without, and prevented his mind from preying upon itself. Thus I find in his handwriting the number of lines in each of two of Euripides' *Tragedies*, of the *Georgics* of Virgil, of the first six books of the *Æneid*, of Horace's *Art of Poetry*, of three of the books of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, of some parts of Theocritus, and of the tenth *Satire* of Juvenal, and a table, showing at the rate of various numbers a day (I suppose verses to be read), what would be in each case the total amount in a week, month, and year.

No man had a more ardent love of literature, or a

<sup>1</sup> [He told Dr. Burney that he never wrote any of his works that were printed twice over. Dr. Burney's wonder at seeing several pages of his *Lives of the Poets* in manuscript, with scarce a blot or erasure, drew this observation from him.—M.]

[ 'It may be questioned whether, except his Bible, he ever read a book entirely through. Late in life, if any man praised a book in his presence, he was sure to ask, "Did you read it through?" If the answer was in the affirmative, he did not seem willing to believe it' (MURPHY).—A. B.]

higher respect for it, than Johnson. His apartment in Pembroke College was that upon the second floor over the gateway. The enthusiast of learning will ever contemplate it with veneration. One day while he was sitting in it quite alone, Dr. Panting, then master of the college, whom he called 'a fine Jacobite fellow,' overheard him uttering this soliloquy in his strong, emphatic voice: 'Well, I have a mind to see what is done in other places of learning. I'll go and visit the universities abroad. I'll go to France and Italy. I'll go to Padua—and I'll mind my business, for an *Athenian* blockhead is the worst of all blockheads.'<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Adams told me that Johnson, while he was at Pembroke College, 'was caressed and loved by all about him, was a gay and frolicsome fellow, and passed there the happiest part of his life.' But this is a striking proof of the fallacy of appearances, and how little any of us know of the real internal state even of those whom we see most frequently, for the truth is that he was then depressed by poverty and irritated by disease. When I mentioned to him this account as given me by Dr. Adams he said, 'Ah, sir, I was mad and violent. It was bitterness which they mistook for frolic. I was miserably poor, and I thought to fight my way by my literature and my wit, so I disregarded all power and all authority.'

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<sup>1</sup> I had this anecdote from Dr. Adams, and Dr. Johnson confirmed it. Bramston, in his *Man of Taste*, has the same thought:

'Sure, of all blockheads, scholars are the worst.'

[Johnson's meaning, however, is, that a scholar who is a blockhead, must be the worst of all blockheads, because he is without excuse. But Bramston, in the assumed character of an ignorant coxcomb, maintains that all scholars are blockheads on account of their scholarship. —J. BOSWELL, junior.]

The Bishop of Dromore observes in a letter to me :

‘The pleasure he took in vexing the tutors and fellows has been often mentioned. But I have heard him say, what ought to be recorded to the honour of the present venerable master of that college, the Reverend William Adams, D.D., who was then very young, and one of the junior fellows ; that the mild but judicious expostulations of this worthy man, whose virtue awed him and whose learning he revered, made him really ashamed of himself, “though I fear (said he) I was too proud to own it.”

‘I have heard from some of his contemporaries that he was generally seen lounging at the College gate, with a circle of young students round him, whom he was entertaining with wit, and keeping from their studies, if not spiring them up to rebellion against the College discipline, which in his maturer years he so much extolled.’

He very early began to attempt keeping notes or memorandums, by way of a diary of his life. I find, in a parcel of loose leaves, the following spirited resolution to contend against his natural indolence : ‘Oct. 1729. *Desidiæ valedixi ; sirenis istius cantibus surdam posthac aurem obversurus*.—I bid farewell to Sloth, being resolved henceforth not to listen to her siren strains.’ I have also in my possession a few leaves of another *Libellus*, or little book, entitled *Annales*, in which some of the early particulars of his history are registered in Latin.

I do not find that he formed any close intimacies with his fellow-collegians. But Dr. Adams told me that he contracted a love and regard for Pembroke College, which he retained to the last. A short time before his death he sent to that College a present of all his works, to be deposited in their library ; and he had thoughts of leaving to it his house at Lichfield ; but his friends who were about him very properly dissuaded him

from it, and he bequeathed it to some poor relations. He took a pleasure in boasting of the many eminent men who had been educated at Pembroke. In this list are found the names of Mr. Hawkins, the Poetry Professor, Mr. Shenstone, Sir William Blackstone, and others;<sup>1</sup> not forgetting the celebrated popular preacher, Mr. George Whitefield, of whom, though Dr. Johnson did not think very highly, it must be acknowledged that his eloquence was powerful, his views pious and charitable, his assiduity almost incredible; and that, since his death, the integrity of his character has been fully vindicated. Being himself a poet, Johnson was peculiarly happy in mentioning how many of the sons of Pembroke were poets; adding, with a smile of sportive triumph, ‘Sir, we are a nest of singing birds.’

He was not, however, blind to what he thought the defects of his own College: and I have, from the information of Dr. Taylor, a very strong instance of that rigid honesty which he ever inflexibly preserved. Taylor had obtained his father’s consent to be entered of Pembroke, that he might be with his schoolfellow Johnson, with whom, though some years older than himself, he was very intimate. This would have been a great comfort to Johnson. But he fairly told Taylor that he could not, in conscience, suffer him to enter where he knew he could not have an able tutor. He then made inquiry all round the University, and having found that Mr. Bateman, of Christ Church, was the tutor of highest reputation, Taylor was entered of that College. Mr. Bateman’s lectures were so excellent,

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<sup>1</sup> See Nash’s *History of Worcestershire*, vol. i. p. 529.

that Johnson used to come and get them at second-hand from Taylor, till his poverty being so extreme, that his shoes were worn out, and his feet appeared through them, he saw that this humiliating circumstance was perceived by the Christ Church men, and he came no more. He was too proud to accept of money, and somebody having set a pair of new shoes at his door, he threw them away with indignation. How must we feel when we read such an anecdote of Samuel Johnson !

His spirited refusal of an eleemosynary supply of shoes arose, no doubt, from a proper pride. But, considering his ascetic disposition at times, as acknowledged by himself in his *Meditations*, and the exaggerations with which some have treated the peculiarities of his character, I should not wonder to hear it ascribed to a principle of superstitious mortification ; as we are told by Tursellinus, in his *Life* of St. Ignatius Loyola, that this intrepid founder of the order of Jesuits, when he arrived at Goa, after having made a severe pilgrimage through the eastern deserts, persisted in wearing his miserable shattered shoes, and when new ones were offered him, rejected them as an unsuitable indulgence.

The *res angusta domi* prevented him from having the advantage of a complete academical education. The friend to whom he had trusted for support had deceived him. His debts in College, though not great, were increasing ; and his scanty remittances from Lichfield, which had all along been made with great difficulty, could be supplied no longer, his father having fallen into a state of insolvency. Compelled, therefore, by irresistible necessity, he left the College



in autumn 1731, without a degree, having been a member of it little more than three years.<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Adams, the worthy and respectable master of Pembroke College, has generally had the reputation of being Johnson's tutor. The fact, however, is, that in 1731, Mr. Jorden quitted the College, and his pupils were transferred to Dr. Adams; so that had Johnson returned, Dr. Adams *would have been his tutor*. It is to be wished that this connection had taken place. His equal temper, mild disposition, and politeness of manners, might have insensibly softened the harshness of Johnson, and infused into him those more delicate charities, those *petites morales*, in which, it must be confessed, our great moralist was more deficient than his best friends could fully justify. Dr. Adams paid Johnson this high compliment. He said to me at Oxford in 1776, 'I was his nominal tutor; but he was above my mark.' When I repeated it to Johnson, his eyes flashed with grateful satisfaction, and he exclaimed, 'That was liberal and noble.'

And now (I had almost said *poor*) Samuel Johnson returned to his native city, destitute, and not knowing how he should gain even a decent livelihood. His father's misfortunes in trade rendered him unable to support his son; and for some time there appeared no means by which he could maintain himself. In the December of this year his father died.

The state of poverty in which he died appears from a note in one of Johnson's little diaries of the following year, which strongly displays his spirit and

<sup>1</sup> [Dr. Hill, who has investigated the matter with the utmost care, is of opinion that Johnson was in actual residence at Pembroke from October 1728 till December 1729, and that after this latter date he never resided in college again except for a week or two in 1730.—A. B.]

virtuous dignity of mind. '1732, *Julii* 15. *Undecim aureos deposui, quo die quicquid ante matris funus (quod serum sit precor) de paternis bonis sperari licet, viginti scilicet libras, accepi. Usque adeo mihi fortuna fingenda est. Interea, ne paupertate vires animi languescant, nec in flagitia egestas abigat, cavendum.*—I laid by eleven guineas on this day, when I received twenty pounds, being all that I have reason to hope for out of my father's effects, previous to the death of my mother; an event which I pray God may be very remote. I now therefore see that I must make my own fortune. Meanwhile, let me take care that the powers of my mind be not debilitated by poverty, and that indigence do not force me into any criminal act.'

Johnson was so far fortunate, that the respectable character of his parents, and his own merit, had, from his earliest years, secured him a kind reception in the best families at Lichfield. Among these I can mention Mr. Howard, Dr. Swinfen, Mr. Simpson, Mr. Levett, Captain Garrick, father of the great ornament of the British stage; but above all, Mr. Gilbert Walmsley,<sup>1</sup> Registrar of the Ecclesiastical Court of Lichfield, whose character, long after his decease, Dr. Johnson has, in his life of Edmund Smith, thus drawn in the glowing colours of gratitude:

'Of Gilbert Walmsley, thus presented to my mind, let me indulge myself in the remembrance. I knew him very early;

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<sup>1</sup> Mr. Warton informs me, 'that this early friend of Johnson was entered a commoner of Trinity College, Oxford, aged seventeen, in 1698; and is the author of many Latin verse translations in the *Gentleman's Magazine*. One of them is a translation of

"My time, O ye Muses, was happily spent," etc.

He died August 3, 1751, and a monument to his memory has been erected in the cathedral of Lichfield, with an inscription written by Mr. Seward, one of the prebendaries.

he was one of the first friends that literature procured me, and I hope that at least my gratitude made me worthy of his notice.

‘He was of an advanced age, and I was only not a boy, yet he never received my notions with contempt. He was a Whig, with all the virulence and malevolence of his party; yet difference of opinion did not keep us apart. I honoured him, and he endured me.

‘He had mingled with the gay world, without exemption from its vices or its follies, but had never neglected the cultivation of his mind. His belief of revelation was unshaken; his learning preserved his principles; he grew first regular, and then pious.

‘His studies had been so various, that I am not able to name a man of equal knowledge. His acquaintance with books was great, and what he did not immediately know, he could, at least, tell where to find. Such was his amplitude of learning, and such his copiousness of communication, that it may be doubted whether a day now passes in which I have not some advantage from his friendship.

‘At this man’s table I enjoyed many cheerful and instructive hours, with companions such as are not often found—with one who has lengthened, and one who has gladdened life; with Dr. James, whose skill in physic will be long remembered; and with David Garrick, whom I hoped to have gratified with this character of our common friend. But what are the hopes of man! I am disappointed by that stroke of death, which has eclipsed the gaiety of nations, and impoverished the public stock of harmless pleasure.’

In these families he passed much time in his early years. In most of them he was in the company of ladies, particularly at Mr. Walmsley’s, whose wife and sisters-in-law, of the name of Aston, and daughters of a baronet, were remarkable for good breeding; so that the notion which has been industriously circulated and believed, that he never was in good company till late in life, and consequently had been confirmed in coarse and ferocious manners by long habits, is wholly without foundation. Some of the

ladies have assured me they recollected him well when a young man as distinguished for his complaisance.

And that his politeness was not merely occasional and temporary, or confined to the circles of Lichfield, is ascertained by the testimony of a lady, who, in a paper with which I have been favoured by a daughter of his intimate friend and physician, Dr. Lawrence, thus describes Dr. Johnson some years afterwards :

‘As the particulars of the former part of Dr. Johnson’s life do not seem to be very accurately known, a lady hopes that the following information may not be unacceptable.

‘She remembers Dr. Johnson on a visit to Dr. Taylor at Ashbourne, sometime between the end of the year ’37 and the middle of the year ’40; she rather thinks it to have been after he and his wife were removed to London. During his stay at Ashbourne, he made frequent visits to Mr. Meynell, at Bradley, where his company was much desired by the ladies of the family, who were, perhaps, in point of elegance and accomplishments, inferior to few of those with whom he was afterwards acquainted. Mr. Meynell’s eldest daughter was afterwards married to Mr. Fitzherbert, father to Mr. Alleyne Fitzherbert, lately minister to the Court of Russia. Of her, Dr. Johnson said, in Dr. Lawrence’s study, that she had the best understanding he ever met with in any human being. At Mr. Meynell’s he also commenced that friendship with Mrs. Hill Boothby, sister to the present Sir Brook Boothby, which continued till her death. *The young woman whom he used to call Molly Aston*,<sup>1</sup> was sister to Sir Thomas Aston, and daughter to a baronet; she was also sister to the wife of his friend, Mr. Gilbert Walmsley.<sup>2</sup> Besides his intimacy with the above-mentioned persons, who were surely people of rank

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<sup>1</sup> The words of Sir John Hawkins, p. 316.

<sup>2</sup> [Sir Thomas Aston, Bart., who died in January 1724-5, left one son, named Thomas also, and eight daughters. Of the daughters, Catharine married Johnson’s friend, the Hon. Henry Hervey; Margaret, Gilbert Walmsley. Another of these ladies married the Rev. Mr. Gastrel. Mary, or *Molly* Aston, as she was usually called, became the wife of Captain Brodie of the Navy. Another sister, who was unmarried, was living at Lichfield in 1776.—M.]

and education, while he was yet at Lichfield he used to be frequently at the house of Dr. Swinfen, a gentleman of very ancient family in Staffordshire, from which, after the death of his elder brother, he inherited a good estate. He was, besides, a physician of very extensive practice; but for want of due attention to the management of his domestic concerns, left a very large family in indigence. One of his daughters, Mrs. Desmoulins, afterwards found an asylum in the house of her old friend, whose doors were always open to the unfortunate, and who well observed the precept of the Gospel, for he "was kind to the unthankful and to the evil."

In the forlorn state of his circumstances, he accepted of an offer to be employed as usher in the school of Market Bosworth, in Leicestershire, to which it appears, from one of his little fragments of a diary, that he went on foot, on the 16th of July:—'*Julii 16, Bosvortiam pedes petii.*' But it is not true, as has been erroneously related, that he was assistant to the famous Anthony Blackwall, whose merit has been honoured by the testimony of Bishop Hurd,<sup>1</sup> who was his scholar; for Mr. Blackwall died on the 8th of April 1730,<sup>2</sup> more than a year before Johnson left the University.

This employment was very irksome to him in every respect, and he complained grievously of it in his letters to his friend, Mr. Hector, who was now settled as a surgeon at Birmingham. The letters are lost; but Mr. Hector recollects his writing 'that the poet

<sup>1</sup> [There is here (as Mr. James Boswell observes to me) a slight inaccuracy. Bishop Hurd, in the Epistle Dedicatory prefixed to his *Commentary on Horace's Art of Poetry*, etc., does not praise Blackwall, but the Rev. Mr. Budworth, headmaster of the grammar school at Brewood in Staffordshire, who had himself been bred under Blackwall. See vol. iv. near the end, where, from the information of Mr. John Nicols, Johnson is said to have applied in 1736 to Mr. Budworth, to be received by him as an assistant in his school in Staffordshire.—M.]

<sup>2</sup> See *Gentleman's Magazine*, December 1734, p. 957.

had described the dull sameness of his existence in these words, "*Vitam continet una dies*" (one day contains the whole of my life); that it was unvaried as the note of the cuckoo; and that he did not know whether it was more disagreeable for him to teach, or the boys to learn, the grammar rules.' His general aversion to this painful drudgery was greatly enhanced by a disagreement between him and Sir Wolstan Dixie, the patron of the school, in whose house, I have been told, he officiated as a kind of domestic chaplain, so far, at least, as to say grace at table, but was treated with what he represented as intolerable harshness: and, after suffering for a few months such complicated misery,<sup>1</sup> he relinquished a situation which all his life afterwards he recollected with the strongest aversion, and even a degree of horror. But it is probable that at this period, whatever uneasiness he may have endured, he laid the foundation of much future eminence by application to his studies.

Being now again totally unoccupied, he was invited by Mr. Hector to pass some time with him at Birmingham as his guest, at the house of Mr. Warren, with whom Mr. Hector lodged and boarded. Mr. Warren was the first established bookseller in Birmingham, and was very attentive to Johnson, whom he soon found could be of much service to him in his trade by his knowledge of literature; and he even obtained the assistance of his pen in furnishing some numbers of a periodical essay printed in the newspaper of which

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<sup>1</sup> [It appears from a letter of Johnson's to a friend, which I have read, dated Lichfield, July 27, 1732, that he had left Sir Wolstan Dixie's house recently, before that letter was written. He then had hopes of succeeding either as master or usher, in the school of Ashbourne.—M.]

Warren was proprietor. After very diligent inquiry, I have not been able to recover those early specimens of that particular mode of writing by which Johnson afterwards so greatly distinguished himself.

He continued to live as Mr. Hector's guest for about six months, and then hired lodgings in another part of the town,<sup>1</sup> finding himself as well situated at Birmingham as he supposed he could be anywhere, while he had no settled plan of life, and very scanty means of subsistence. He made some valuable acquaintances there, amongst whom were Mr. Porter, a mercer, whose widow he afterwards married, and Mr. Taylor, who, by his ingenuity in mechanical inventions, and his success in trade, acquired an immense fortune. But the comfort of being near Mr. Hector, his old schoolfellow and intimate friend, was Johnson's chief inducement to continue here.

In what manner he employed his pen at this period, or whether he derived from it any pecuniary advantage, I have not been able to ascertain. He probably got a little money from Mr. Warren; and we are certain that he executed here one piece of literary labour of which Mr. Hector has favoured me with a minute account. Having mentioned that he had read at Pembroke College a *Voyage to Abyssinia*, by Lobo, a Portuguese Jesuit, and that he thought an abridgment and translation of it from the French into English might be a useful and profitable publication, Mr Warren and Mr. Hector joined in urging him to under-

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<sup>1</sup> [In June 1733, Sir John Hawkins states, from one of Johnson's diaries, that he lodged in Birmingham at the house of a person named Jarvis, probably a relation of Mrs. Porter, whom he afterwards married.—M.]

take it. He accordingly agreed ; and the book not being to be found in Birmingham, he borrowed it of Pembroke College. A part of the work being very soon done, one Osborn, who was Mr. Warren's printer, was set to work with what was ready, and Johnson engaged to supply the press with copy as it should be wanted ; but his constitutional indolence soon prevailed, and the work was at a stand. Mr. Hector, who knew that a motive of humanity would be the most prevailing argument with his friend, went to Johnson, and represented to him that the printer could have no other employment till this undertaking was finished, and that the poor man and his family were suffering. Johnson upon this exerted the powers of his mind, though his body was relaxed. He lay in bed with the book, which was a quarto, before him, and dictated while Hector wrote. Mr. Hector carried the sheets to the press, and corrected almost all the proof-sheets, very few of which were ever seen by Johnson. In this manner, with the aid of Mr. Hector's active friendship, the book was completed, and was published in 1735, with London upon the title-page, though it was in reality printed at Birmingham, a device too common with provincial publishers. For this work he had from Mr. Warren only the sum of five guineas.<sup>1</sup>

This being the first prose work of Johnson, it is a curious object of inquiry how much may be traced in it of that style which marks his subsequent writings with such peculiar excellence ; with so happy a union of force, vivacity, and perspicuity. I have perused the book with this view, and have found that here, as I believe in every other translation, there is in the



work itself no vestige of the translator's own style ; for the language of translation being adapted to the thoughts of another person, insensibly follows their cast, and, as it were, runs into a mould that is ready prepared.

Thus, for instance, taking the first sentence that occurs at the opening of the book, p. 4 :

'I lived here above a year, and completed my studies in divinity, in which time some letters were received from the fathers of Ethiopia, with an account that Sultan Segned, Emperor of Abyssinia, was converted to the Church of Rome ; that many of his subjects had followed his example, and that there was a great want of missionaries to improve these prosperous beginnings. Everybody was very desirous of seconding the zeal of our fathers, and of sending them the assistance they requested, to which we were the more encouraged because the Emperor's letter informed our provincial that we might easily enter his dominions by the way of Dancala ; but, unhappily, the Secretary wrote Geila for Dancala, which cost two of our fathers their lives.'

Every one acquainted with Johnson's manner will be sensible that there is nothing of it here ; but that this sentence might have been composed by any other man.

But in the Preface the Johnsonian style begins to appear ; and though use had not yet taught his wing a permanent and equable flight, there are parts of it which exhibit his best manner in full vigour. I had once the pleasure of examining it with Mr. Edmund Burke, who confirmed me in this opinion by his superior critical sagacity, and was, I remember, much delighted with the following specimen :

'The Portuguese traveller, contrary to the general vein of his countrymen, has amused his reader with no romantic

absurdity or incredible fictions ; whatever he relates, whether true or not, is at least probable ; and he who tells nothing exceeding the bounds of probability has a right to demand that they should believe him who cannot contradict him.

‘He appears by his modest and unaffected narration to have described things as he saw them, to have copied nature from the life, and to have consulted his senses, not his imagination. He meets with no basilisks that destroy with their eyes ; his crocodiles devour their prey without tears, and his cataracts fall from the rocks without deafening the neighbouring inhabitants.

‘The reader will here find no regions cursed with irremediable barrenness, or blest with spontaneous fecundity ; no perpetual gloom, or unceasing sunshine ; nor are the nations here described either devoid of all sense of humanity or consummate in all private or social virtues. Here are no Hottentots without religious policy or articulate language ; no Chinese perfectly polite, and completely skilled in all sciences ; he will discover, what will always be discovered by a diligent and impartial inquirer, that wherever human nature is to be found, there is a mixture of vice and virtue, a contest of passion and reason ; and that the Creator doth not appear partial in his distributions, but has balanced, in most countries, their particular inconveniences by particular favours.’

Here we have an early example of that brilliant and energetic expression which upon innumerable occasions in his subsequent life justly impressed the world with the highest admiration.

Nor can any one conversant with the writings of Johnson fail to discern his hand in this passage of the Dedication to John Warren, Esq. of Pembrokeshire, though it is ascribed to Warren the bookseller :

‘A generous and elevated mind is distinguished by nothing more certainly than an eminent degree of curiosity ;<sup>1</sup> nor is that curiosity ever more agreeably or usefully employed

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<sup>1</sup> See *Rambler*, No. 103.

than in examining the laws and customs of foreign nations. I hope, therefore, the present I now presume to make will not be thought improper, which, however, it is not my business as a dedicator to commend, nor as a bookseller to depreciate.'

It is reasonable to suppose that his having been thus accidentally led to a particular study of the history and manners of Abyssinia, was the remote occasion of his writing, many years afterwards, his admirable philosophical tale, the principal scene of which is laid in that country.

Johnson returned to Lichfield early in 1734, and in August that year he made an attempt to procure some little subsistence by his pen; for he published proposals for printing by subscription the Latin Poems of Politian :<sup>1</sup> '*Angeli Politiani Poemata Latina, quibus Notas, cum Historia Latinæ poeseos, a Petrarchæ ævo ad Politiani tempora deducta, et vita Politiani fusius quam antehac enarrata, addidit* SAM. JOHNSON.'<sup>2</sup>

It appears that his brother Nathanael had taken up his father's trade; for it is mentioned that 'subscriptions are taken in by the Editor, or N. Johnson, bookseller, of Lichfield.' Notwithstanding the merit of Johnson, and the cheap price at which his book was offered, there were not subscribers enough to ensure a sufficient sale; so the work never appeared, and probably never was executed.

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<sup>1</sup> May we not trace a fanciful similarity between Politian and Johnson? Huetius, speaking of Paulus Pelissonius Fontanerius, says, '—in quo Natura, ut olim in Angelo Politiano, deformitatem oris excellentis ingenii præstantia compensavit.'—*Comment. de Reb. ad eum pertin.* Edit. Amstel. 1718, p. 200.

<sup>2</sup> The book was to contain more than thirty sheets; the price to be two shillings and sixpence at the time of subscribing, and two shillings and sixpence at the delivery of a perfect book in quires.

We find him again this year at Birmingham, and there is preserved the following letter from him to Mr. Edward Cave,<sup>1</sup> the original compiler and editor of the *Gentleman's Magazine* :

TO MR. CAVE

'Nov. 25, 1734.

'SIR,—As you appear no less sensible than your readers of the defects of your poetical article, you will not be displeased if, in order to the improvement of it, I communicate to you the sentiments of a person who will undertake, on reasonable terms, sometimes to fill a column.

'His opinion is that the public would not give you a bad reception if, beside the current wit of the month, which a critical examination would generally reduce to a narrow compass, you admitted not only poems, inscriptions, etc., never printed before, which he will sometimes supply you with, but likewise short literary dissertations in Latin or English, critical remarks on authors ancient or modern, forgotten poems that deserve revival, or loose pieces, like Floyer's,<sup>2</sup> worth preserving. By this method, your literary article, for so it might be called, will, he thinks, be better recommended to the public than by low jests, awkward buffoonery, or the dull scurrilities of either party.

'If such a correspondence will be agreeable to you, be pleased to inform me, in two posts, what the conditions are on which you shall expect it. Your late offer<sup>3</sup> gives me no reason to distrust your generosity. If you engage in any literary projects besides this paper, I have other designs to impart, if I could be secure from having others reap the advantage of what I should hint.

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<sup>1</sup> Miss Cave, the grandniece of Mr. Edw. Cave, has obligingly shown me the originals of this and the other letters of Dr. Johnson to him, which were first published in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, with notes by Mr. John Nichols, the worthy and indefatigable editor of that valuable miscellany, signed N., some of which I shall occasionally transcribe in the course of this work.

<sup>2</sup> Sir John Floyer's 'Treatise on Cold Baths.'—*Gentleman's Magazine*, 1734, p. 197.

<sup>3</sup>[A prize of fifty pounds for the best poem 'On Life, Death, Judgment, Heaven, and Hell.' See *Gentleman's Magazine*, vol. iv. p. 560.—NICHOLS.]

‘Your letter, by being directed to *S. Smith*, to be left at the Castle in Birmingham, Warwickshire, will reach

‘Your humble servant.’

Mr. Cave has put a note on this letter, ‘Answered Dec. 2.’ But whether anything was done in consequence of it we are not informed.

Johnson had, from his early youth, been sensible to the influence of female charms. When at Stourbridge school he was much enamoured of Olivia Lloyd, a young quaker, to whom he wrote a copy of verses, which I have not been able to recover ; but with what facility and elegance he could warble the amorous lay will appear from the following lines which he wrote for his friend Mr. Edmund Hector :

*Verses to a Lady, on receiving from her a Sprig of Myrtle*

‘What hopes, what terrors does thy gift create,  
Ambiguous emblem of uncertain fate !  
The myrtle, ensign of supreme command,  
Consign’d by Venus to Melissa’s hand ;  
Not less capricious than a reigning fair,  
Now grants, and now rejects a lover’s prayer.  
In myrtle shades oft sings the happy swain ;  
In myrtle shades despairing ghosts complain ;  
The myrtle crowns the happy lovers’ heads,  
The unhappy lover’s grave the myrtle spreads :  
O then the meaning of thy gift impart,  
And ease the throbbings of an anxious heart !  
Soon must this bough, as you shall fix his doom,  
Adorn Philander’s head, or grace his tomb.’<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Piozzi gives the following account of this little composition from Dr. Johnson’s own relation to her, on her inquiring whether it was rightly attributed to him :—‘I think it is now just forty years ago that a young fellow had a sprig of myrtle given him by a girl he courted, and asked me to write him some verses that he might present her in return. I promised, but forgot ; and when he called for his lines at the time agreed on—“Sit still a moment (says I), dear Mund, and I’ll

His juvenile attachments to the fair sex were, however, very transient; and it is certain that he formed no criminal connection whatsoever. Mr. Hector, who lived with him in his younger days in the utmost intimacy and social freedom, has assured me, that even at that ardent season his conduct was strictly virtuous in that respect; and that though he loved to exhilarate himself with wine, he never knew him intoxicated but once.

In a man whom religious education has secured from licentious indulgences, the passion of love, when once it has seized him, is exceedingly strong; being unimpaired by dissipation, and totally concentrated in one object. This was experienced by Johnson, when

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fetch them thee"—so stepped aside for five minutes, and wrote the nonsense you now keep such a stir about.'—*Anecdotes*.

In my first edition I was induced to doubt the authenticity of this account by the following circumstantial statement in a letter to me from Miss Seward, of Lichfield:—'*I know those verses were addressed to Lucy Porter, when he was enamoured of her in his boyish days, two or three years before he had seen her mother, his future wife. He wrote them at my grandfather's, and gave them to Lucy in the presence of my mother, to whom he showed them on the instant. She used to repeat them to me when I asked her for the Verses Dr. Johnson gave her on a Sprig of Myrtle, which he had stolen or begged from her bosom.* We all know honest Lucy Porter to have been incapable of the mean vanity of applying to herself a compliment not *intended* for her.' Such was this lady's statement, which I make no doubt she supposed to be correct; but it shows how dangerous it is to trust too implicitly to traditional testimony and ingenious inference; for Mr. Hector has lately assured me that Mrs. Piozzi's account is in this instance accurate, and that he was the person for whom Johnson wrote those verses, which have been erroneously ascribed to Mr. Hammond.

I am obliged in so many instances to notice Mrs. Piozzi's incorrectness of relation, that I gladly seize this opportunity of acknowledging that, however often, she is not always inaccurate.

The author having been drawn into a controversy with Miss Anna Seward, in consequence of the preceding statement (which may be found in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, vol. lxxiii. and lxxiv.) received the following letter from Mr. Edmund Hector on the subject:

'DEAR SIR,—I am sorry to see you are engaged in altercation with a lady who seems unwilling to be convinced of her errors. Surely it would be more ingenuous to acknowledge than to persevere.

he became the fervent admirer of Mrs. Porter after her first husband's death.<sup>1</sup> Miss Porter told me, that when he was first introduced to her mother, his appearance was very forbidding: he was then lean and lank, so that his immense structure of bones was hideously striking to the eye, and the scars of the scrofula were deeply visible. He also wore his hair, which was straight and stiff, and separated behind: and he often had, seemingly, convulsive starts and odd gesticulations, which tended to excite at once surprise and ridicule. Mrs. Porter was so much engaged by his conversation that she overlooked all these external disadvantages, and said to her daughter, 'this is the most sensible man that I ever saw in my life.'

Though Mrs. Porter was double the age of Johnson,<sup>2</sup>

'Lately, in looking over some papers I meant to burn, I found the original manuscript of the myrtle, with the date on it, 1731, which I have enclosed.

'The true history (which I could swear to) is as follows:—Mr. Morgan Graves, the elder brother of a worthy clergyman near Bath, with whom I was acquainted, waited upon a lady in this neighbourhood, who at parting presented him the branch. He showed it me, and wished much to return the compliment in verse. I applied to Johnson, who was with me, and in about half an hour dictated the verses, which I sent to my friend.

'I most solemnly declare, at that time Johnson was an entire stranger to the Porter family; and it was almost two years after that I introduced him to the acquaintance of Porter, whom I bought my clothes of.

'If you intend to convince this obstinate woman, and to exhibit to the public the truth of your narrative, you are at liberty to make what use you please of this statement.

'I hope you will pardon me for taking up so much of your time. Wishing you *multos et felices annos*, I shall subscribe myself your obliged humble servant,

E. HECTOR.

*Birmingham, Jan. 9th, 1794.'*

<sup>1</sup> [It appears, from Mr. Hector's letter, that Johnson became acquainted with her three years before he married her.—M.]

<sup>2</sup> [Mrs. Johnson's maiden name was Jervis. Though there was a great disparity of years between her and Dr. Johnson, she was not quite so old as she is here represented, being only at the time of her marriage in her forty-eighth year, as appears by the following extract from the parish-register of Great Peatling, in Leicestershire, which was

and her person and manner, as described to me by the late Mr. Garrick, were by no means pleasing to others,<sup>1</sup> she must have had a superiority of understanding and talents,<sup>2</sup> as she certainly inspired him with a more than ordinary passion; and she having signified her willingness to accept of his hand, he went to Lichfield to ask his mother's consent to the marriage, which he could not but be conscious was a very imprudent scheme, both on account of their disparity of years, and her want of fortune. But Mrs. Johnson knew too well the ardour of her son's temper, and was too tender a parent to oppose his inclinations.

obligingly made, at my request, by the Hon. and Rev. Mr. Ryder, Rector of Lutterworth, in that county:—

'Anno Dom. 1688[-9], Elizabeth, the daughter of William Jervis, Esq., and Mrs. Anne his wife, born the fourth day of February and *mané*, baptized 16th day of the same month by Mr. Smith, Curate of Little Peatling.  
JOHN ALLEN, Vicar.'

The family of Jervis, Mr. Ryder informs me, once possessed nearly the whole lordship of Great Peatling (about 2000 acres), and there are many monuments of them in the church; but the estate is now much reduced. The present representative of this ancient family is Mr. Charles Jervis, of Hinckley, Attorney-at-Law.—M.]

<sup>1</sup> [That in Johnson's eyes she was handsome appears from the epitaph which he caused to be inscribed on her tombstone not long before his own death, and which may be found in a subsequent page, under the year 1752.—M.]

<sup>2</sup> [The following account of Mrs. Johnson and her family is copied from a paper (chiefly relating to Mrs. Anna Williams) written by Lady Knight at Rome, and transmitted by her to the late John Hoole, Esq., the translator of Metastasio, etc., by whom it was inserted in the *European Magazine* for October 1799:—

'Mrs. Williams's account of Mrs. Johnson was that she had a good understanding and great sensibility, but inclined to be satirical. Her first husband died insolvent; her sons were much disgusted with her for her second marriage, perhaps because they, being struggling to get advanced in life, were mortified to think she had allied herself to a man who had not any visible means of being useful to them: however, she always retained her affection for them. While they (Dr. and Mrs. Johnson) resided in Gough Square, her son, the officer, knocked at the door, and asked the maid if her mistress was at home. She answered, "Yes, sir; but she is sick in bed." "O," says he, "if it's so, tell her that her son Jervis called to know how she did"; and was going away. The maid begged she might run up to tell her mistress, and without attending his answer, left him. Mrs. Johnson, enraptured to hear that her son was below, desired the maid to tell him she longed to embrace





*Mrs. Porter*



I know not for what reason the marriage ceremony was not performed at Birmingham; but a resolution was taken that it should be at Derby, for which place the bride and bridegroom set out on horseback, I suppose in very good humour. But though Mr Topham Beauclerk used archly to mention Johnson's having told him, with much gravity, 'Sir, it was a love marriage on both sides,' I have had from my illustrious friend the following curious account of their journey to church upon the nuptial morn (9th July):—'Sir, she had read the old romances, and had got into her head the fantastical notion that a woman of spirit should use her lover like a dog. So, sir, at first she told me that I rode too fast, and she could not keep up with me, and, when I rode a little slower, she passed me, and complained that I lagged behind. I was not to be made the slave of caprice; and I resolved to begin as I meant to end. I therefore

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him. When the maid descended the gentleman was gone, and poor Mrs. Johnson was much agitated by the adventure; it was the only time he ever made an effort to see her. Dr. Johnson did all he could to console his wife, but told Mrs. Williams, "Her son is uniformly undutiful; so I conclude, like many other sober men, he might once in his life be drunk, and in that fit nature got the better of his pride."

The following anecdotes of Dr. Johnson are recorded by the same lady:—

'One day that he came to my house to meet many others, we told him that we had arranged our party to go to Westminster Abbey: would not he go with us? "*No*," he replied, "*not while I can keep out.*"

'Upon our saying that the friends of a lady had been in great fear lest he should make a certain match, he said, "We that are *his* friends have had great fears for him."

'Dr. Johnson's political principles ran high, both in Church and State: he wished power to the King and to the Heads of the Church, as the laws of England have established; but I know he disliked absolute power; and I am very sure of his disapprobation of the doctrines of the Church of Rome; because about three weeks before we came abroad he said to my Cornelia, "You are going where the ostentatious pomp of church ceremonies attracts the imagination; but if they want to persuade you to change, you must remember, that by increasing your faith, you may be persuaded to become Turk." If these were not the words, I have kept up to the express meaning.'—[M.]

pushed on briskly, till I was fairly out of her sight. The road lay between two hedges, so I was sure she could not miss it; and I contrived that she should soon come up with me. When she did, I observed her to be in tears.'

This, it must be allowed, was a singular beginning of connubial felicity; but there is no doubt that Johnson, though he thus showed a manly firmness, proved a most affectionate and indulgent husband to the last moment of Mrs. Johnson's life: and in his *Prayers and Meditations*, we find very remarkable evidence that his regard and fondness for her never ceased, even after her death.

He now set up a private academy, for which purpose he hired a large house, well situated, near his native city. In the *Gentleman's Magazine* for 1736, there is the following advertisement: 'At Edial, near Lichfield, in Staffordshire, young gentlemen are boarded and taught the Latin and Greek languages, by Samuel Johnson.' But the only pupils who were put under his care were the celebrated David Garrick and his brother George, and a Mr. Offely, a young gentleman of good fortune, who died early. As yet, his name had nothing of that celebrity which afterwards commanded the highest attention and respect of mankind. Had such an advertisement appeared after the publication of his *London*, or his *Rambler*, or his *Dictionary*, how would it have burst upon the world! with what eagerness would the great and the wealthy have embraced an opportunity of putting their sons under the learned tuition of Samuel Johnson! The truth, however, is, that he was not so well qualified for being a teacher of elements and a conductor in learning by regular gradations, as men of inferior powers of mind. His now acquisitions had been made by fits and starts, by

violent irruptions in the regions of knowledge ; and it could not be expected that his impatience would be subdued, and his impetuosity restrained, so as to fit him for a quiet guide to novices. The art of communicating instruction, of whatever kind, is much to be valued ; and I have ever thought that those who devote themselves to this employment, and do their duty with diligence and success, are entitled to very high respect from the community, as Johnson himself often maintained. Yet I am of opinion, that the greatest abilities are not only not required for this office, but render a man less fit for it.

While we acknowledge the justness of Thomson's beautiful remark,

‘Delightful task ! to rear the tender thought,  
And teach the young idea how to shoot !’

we must consider that this delight is perceptible only by ‘a mind at ease,’ a mind at once calm and clear ; but that a mind gloomy and impetuous, like that of Johnson, cannot be fixed for any length of time in minute attention, and must be so frequently irritated by unavoidable slowness and error in the advances of scholars, as to perform the duty with little pleasure to the teacher and no great advantage to the pupils. Good temper is a most essential requisite in a preceptor. Horace paints the character as *bland* :

‘ . . . Ut pueris olim dant crustula *blandi*  
Doctores, elementa velint ut discere primai.’—*Sat.* i. i. 25.

Johnson was not more satisfied with his situation as the master of an academy, than with that of the usher of a school ; we need not wonder, therefore, that he did not keep his academy above a year and a half.

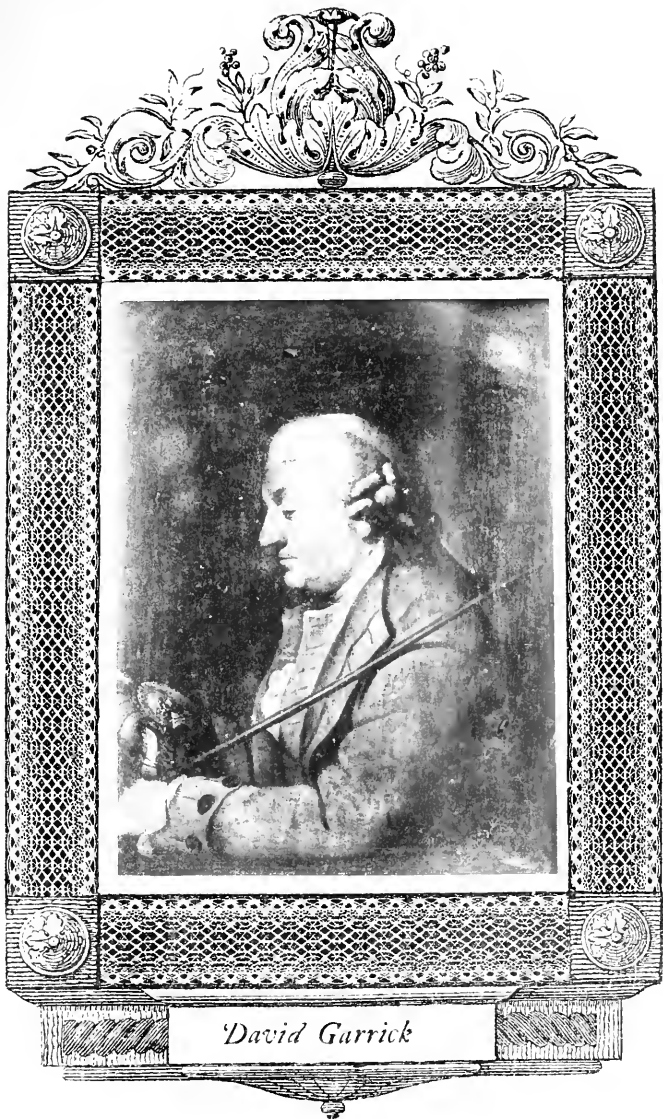
From Mr. Garrick's account he did not appear to have been profoundly revered by his pupils. His oddities of manner, and uncouth gesticulations, could not but be the subject of merriment to them; and in particular, the young rogues used to listen at the door of his bed-chamber, and peep through the key-hole, that they might turn into ridicule his tumultuous and awkward fondness for Mrs. Johnson, whom he used to name by the familiar appellation of *Tetty* or *Tetsey*, which, like *Betty* or *Betsey*, is provincially used as a contraction for *Elizabeth*, her Christian name, but which to us seems ludicrous, when applied to a woman of her age and appearance. Mr. Garrick described her to me as very fat, with a bosom of more than ordinary protuberance, with swelled cheeks, of a florid red, produced by thick painting, and increased by the liberal use of cordials; flaring and fantastic in her dress, and affected both in her speech and her general behaviour. I have seen Garrick exhibit her, by his exquisite talent of mimicry, so as to excite the heartiest bursts of laughter; but he, probably, as is the case in all such representations, considerably aggravated the picture.

That Johnson well knew the most proper course to be pursued in the instruction of youth, is authentically ascertained by the following paper in his own handwriting, given about this period to a relation, and now in the possession of Mr. John Nichols:

*Scheme for the Classes of a Grammar School*

'When the introduction or formation of nouns and verbs is perfectly mastered, let them learn

'Corderius, by Mr. Clarke; beginning at the same time to











*Robert Dodsley*

translate out of the introduction, that by this means they may learn the syntax. Then let them proceed to

‘Erasmus, with an English translation, by the same author.

‘Class II.—Learn Eutropius and Cornelius Nepos, or Justin, with the translation.

‘N.B.—The first class gets for their part every morning the rules which they have learned before, and in the afternoon learns the Latin rules of the nouns and verbs.

‘They are examined in the rules which they have learned every Thursday and Saturday.

‘The second class does the same whilst they are in Eutropius; afterwards their part is in the irregular nouns and verbs, and in the rules for making and scanning verses. They are examined as the first.

‘Class III.—Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* in the morning, and Cæsar’s *Commentaries* in the afternoon.

‘Practice in the Latin rules till they are perfect in them; afterwards in Mr. Leed’s Greek Grammar. Examined as before.

‘Afterwards they proceed to Virgil, beginning at the same time to write themes and verses, and to learn Greek: from thence passing on to Horace, etc., as shall seem proper.

‘I know not well what books to direct you to, because you have not informed me what study you will apply yourself to. I believe it will be most for your advantage to apply yourself wholly to the languages, till you go to the university. The Greek authors I think it best for you to read are these:

‘Cebes.

‘Ælian.

‘Lucian by Leeds.

‘Xenophon.

‘Homer.

‘Theocritus.

‘Euripides.

} Attic.

Ionic.

Doric.

Attic and Doric.

‘Thus you will be tolerably skilled in all the dialects, beginning with the Attic, to which the rest must be referred.

‘In the study of Latin, it is proper not to read the latter authors, till you are well versed in those of the purest ages; as Terence, Tully, Cæsar, Sallust, Nepos, Velleius Paterculus, Virgil, Horace, Phædrus.

'The greatest and most necessary task still remains, to attain a habit of expression, without which knowledge is of little use. This is necessary in Latin, and more necessary in English; and can only be acquired by a daily imitation of the best and correctest authors. SAM. JOHNSON.'

While Johnson kept his academy, there can be no doubt that he was insensibly furnishing his mind with various knowledge; but I have not discovered that he wrote anything except a great part of his tragedy of *Irene*. Mr. Peter Garrick, the elder brother of David, told me that he remembered Johnson's borrowing the Turkish History of him, in order to form his play from it. When he had finished some part of it, he read what he had done to Mr. Walmsley, who objected to his having already brought his heroine into great distress, and asked him, 'How can you possibly contrive to plunge her into deeper calamity?' Johnson, in sly allusion to the supposed oppressive proceedings of the court of which Mr. Walmsley was registrar, replied, 'Sir, I can put her into the Spiritual Court!'

Mr. Walmsley, however, was well pleased with this proof of Johnson's abilities as a dramatic writer, and advised him to finish the tragedy, and produce it on the stage.

Johnson now thought of trying his fortune in London, the great field of genius and exertion, where talents of every kind have the fullest scope and the highest encouragement. It is a memorable circumstance that his pupil David Garrick went thither at the same time,<sup>1</sup> with intent to complete his education,

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<sup>1</sup> Both of them used to talk pleasantly of this their first journey to London. Garrick, evidently meaning to embellish a little, said one day in my hearing, 'we rode and tied.' And the Bishop of Killaloe

and follow the profession of the law, from which he was soon diverted by his decided preference for the stage.

This joint expedition of those two eminent men to the metropolis was many years afterwards noticed in an allegorical poem on Shakespeare's mulberry tree, by Mr. Lovibond, the ingenious author of *The Tears of Old May-Day*.

They were recommended to Mr. Colson,<sup>1</sup> an eminent mathematician and master of an academy, by the following letter from Mr. Walmsley:—

TO THE REV. MR. COLSON

*'Lichfield, March 12, 1737.*

'DEAR SIR,—I had the favour of yours, and am extremely obliged to you; but I cannot say I had a greater affection for you upon it than I had before, being long since so much endeared to you, as well as by an early friendship, as by your many excellent and valuable qualifications; and, had I a son of my own, it would be my ambition, instead of sending him to the university, to dispose of him as this young gentleman is.

'He, and another neighbour of mine, one Mr. Samuel

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(Dr. Barnard) informed me, that at another time, when Johnson and Garrick were dining together in a pretty large company, Johnson humorously ascertaining the chronology of something, expressed himself thus: 'That was the year when I came to London with twopence halfpenny in my pocket.' Garrick overhearing him, exclaimed, 'Eh? what do you say? with twopence halfpenny in your pocket?'—JOHNSON: 'Why, yes; when I came with twopence halfpenny in *my* pocket, and thou, Davy, with three halfpence in thine.'

<sup>1</sup> [The Reverend John Colson was bred at Emmanuel College in Cambridge, and in 1728, when George the Second visited that University, was created Master of Arts. About that time he became First Master of the Free School at Rochester, founded by Sir Joseph Williamson. In 1739, he was appointed Lucasian Professor of Mathematics in the University of Cambridge, on the death of Professor Sanderson, and held that office till 1759, when he died. He published *Lectures on Experimental Philosophy*, translated from the French of l'Abbé Nodet, 8vo, 1732, and some other tracts. Our author, it is believed, was mistaken in stating him to have been master of an Academy. Garrick, probably, during his short residence at Rochester, lived in his house as a private pupil.

The character of Gelidus, the philosopher, in the *Rambler* (No. 24), was meant to represent this gentleman. See Mrs. Piozzi's *Anecdotes* etc., p. 444.—M.]

Johnson, set out this morning for London together. Davy Garriek is to be with you early the next week, and Mr. Johnson to try his fate with a tragedy, and to see to get himself employed in some translation, either from the Latin or the French. Johnson is a very good scholar and poet, and I have great hopes will turn out a fine tragedy-writer. If it should any way lie in your way, I doubt not but you would be ready to recommend and assist your countryman,

‘G. WALMSLEY.’

How he employed himself upon his first coming to London is not particularly known.<sup>1</sup> I never heard that he found any protection or encouragement by the means of Mr. Colson, to whose academy David Garrick went. Mrs. Lucy Porter told me that Mr. Walmsley gave him a letter of introduction to Lintot his bookseller, and that Johnson wrote some things for him ; but I imagine this to be a mistake, for I have discovered no trace of it, and I am pretty sure he told me that Mr. Cave was the first publisher by whom his pen was engaged in London.

He had a little money when he came to town, and he knew how he could live in the cheapest manner. His first lodgings were at the house of Mr. Norris, a stay-maker, in Exeter Street, adjoining Catharine Street in the Strand. ‘I dined (said he) very well for eightpence, with very good company, at the Pine Apple in New Street, just by. Several of them had travelled. They expected to meet every day ; but did not know one another’s names. It used to cost the rest a shilling, for they drank wine ; but I had a cut

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<sup>1</sup> One curious anecdote was communicated by himself to Mr. John Nichols. Mr. Wilcox, the bookseller, on being informed by him that his intention was to get his livelihood as an author, eyed his robust frame attentively, and with a significant look, said, ‘You had better buy a porter’s knot.’ He however added, ‘Wilcox was one of my best friends.’

of meat for sixpence, and bread for a penny, and gave the waiter a penny; so that I was quite well served, nay, better than the rest, for they gave the waiter nothing.'

He at this time, I believe, abstained entirely from fermented liquors; a practice to which he rigidly conformed for many years together, at different periods of his life.

His Ofellus, in the *Art of Living in London*, I have heard him relate, was an Irish painter, whom he knew at Birmingham, and who had practised his own precepts of economy for several years in the British capital. He assured Johnson, who, I suppose, was then meditating to try his fortune in London, but was apprehensive of the expense, 'that thirty pounds a year was enough to enable a man to live there without being contemptible. He allowed ten pounds for clothes and linen. He said a man might live in a garret at eighteenpence a week; few people would inquire where he lodged; and if they did, it was easy to say, "Sir, I am to be found at such a place." By spending threepence in a coffee-house, he might be for some hours every day in very good company; he might dine for sixpence, breakfast on bread and milk for a penny, and do without supper. On *clean shirt-day* he went abroad, and paid visits.' I have heard him more than once talk of his frugal friend, whom he recollected with esteem and kindness, and did not like to have one smile at the recital. 'This man (said he gravely) was a very sensible man, who perfectly understood common affairs: a man of a great deal of knowledge of the world, fresh from life, not strained through books. He borrowed a horse and ten pounds

at Birmingham. Finding himself master of so much money, he set off for West Chester, in order to get to Ireland. He returned the horse, and probably the ten pounds too, after he got home.'

Considering Johnson's narrow circumstance<sup>s</sup> in the early part of his life, and particularly at the interesting era of his launching into the ocean of London, it is not to be wondered at, that an actual instance, proved by experience, of the possibility of enjoying the intellectual luxury of social life upon a very small income, should deeply engage his attention, and be ever recollected by him as a circumstance of much importance. He amused himself, I remember, by computing how much more expense was absolutely necessary to live upon the same scale with that which his friend described, when the value of money was diminished by the progress of commerce. It may be estimated that double the money might now with difficulty be sufficient.

Amidst this cold obscurity, there was one brilliant circumstance to cheer him; he was well acquainted with Mr. Henry Hervey,<sup>1</sup> one of the branches of the noble family of that name, who had been quartered at Lichfield as an officer of the army, and had at this time a house in London, where Johnson was frequently

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<sup>1</sup> The Honourable Henry Hervey, third son of the first Earl of Bristol, quitted the army, and took orders. He married a sister of Sir Thomas Aston, by whom he got the Aston estate, and assumed the name and arms of that family. *Vide Collins's Peerage.*

[The Hon. Henry Hervey was nearly of the same age with Johnson, having been born about nine months before him, in the year 1709. He married Catbarine, the sister of Sir Thomas Aston, in 1739; and as that lady had seven sisters, she probably succeeded to the Aston estate on the death of her brother under his will. Mr. Hervey took the degree of Master of Arts at Cambridge, at the late age of thirty-five, in 1744; about which time, it is believed, he entered into holy orders. —M.]



entertained, and had an opportunity of meeting genteel company. Not very long before his death, he mentioned this, among other particulars of his life, which he was kindly communicating to me; and he described this early friend, 'Harry Hervey,' thus: 'He was a vicious man, but very kind to me. If you call a dog Hervey, I shall love him.'

He told me he had now written only three acts of his *Irene*, and that he retired for some time to lodgings at Greenwich, where he proceeded in it somewhat further, and used to compose, walking in the Park; but did not stay long enough at that place to finish it.

At this period we find the following letter from him to Mr. Edward Cave, which, as a link in the chain of his literary history, it is proper to insert:

TO MR. CAVE

*'Greenwich, next door to the Golden Heart,  
Church Street, July 12, 1737.*

'SIR,—Having observed in your papers very uncommon offers of encouragement to men of letters, I have chosen, being a stranger in London, to communicate to you the following design, which, I hope, if you join in it, will be of advantage to both of us.

'The *History of the Council of Trent* having been lately translated into French, and published with large Notes by Dr. Le Courayer, the reputation of that book is so much revived in England, that, it is presumed, a new translation of it from the Italian, together with Le Courayer's Notes from the French, could not fail of a favourable reception.

'If it be answered, that the History is already in English, it must be remembered that there was the same objection against Le Courayer's undertaking, with this disadvantage, that the French had a version by one of their best translators, whereas you cannot read three pages of the English History

without discovering that the style is capable of great improvements; but whether those improvements are to be expected from the attempt, you must judge from the specimen which, if you approve the proposal, I shall submit to your examination.

‘Suppose the merit of the versions equal, we may hope that the addition of the Notes will turn the balance in our favour, considering the reputation of the annotator.

‘Be pleased to favour me with a speedy answer, if you are not willing to engage in this scheme; and appoint me a day to wait upon you, if you are. I am, sir, your humble servant,  
‘SAM. JOHNSON.’

It should seem from this letter, though subscribed with his own name, that he had not yet been introduced to Mr. Cave. We shall presently see what was done in consequence of the proposal which it contains.

In the course of the summer he returned to Lichfield, where he had left Mrs. Johnson, and there he at last finished his tragedy, which was not executed with his rapidity of composition upon other occasions, but was slowly and painfully elaborated. A few days before his death, while burning a great mass of papers, he picked out from among them the original unformed sketch of this tragedy, in his own handwriting, and gave it to Mr. Langton, by whose favour a copy of it is now in my possession. It contains fragments of the intended plot, and speeches for the different persons of the drama, partly in the raw materials of prose, partly worked up into verse; as also a variety of hints for illustration, borrowed from the Greek, Roman, and modern writers. The handwriting is very difficult to be read, even by those who are best acquainted with Johnson’s mode of penmanship, which at all times was very particular. The King having graciously accepted

of this manuscript as a literary curiosity, Mr. Langton made a fair and distinct copy of it, which he ordered to be bound up with the original and the printed tragedy; and the volume is deposited in the King's library. His Majesty was pleased to permit Mr. Langton to take a copy of it for himself.

The whole of it is rich in thought and imagery, and happy expressions; and of the *disjecta membra* scattered throughout, and as yet unarranged, a good dramatic poet might avail himself with considerable advantage. I shall give my readers some specimens of different kinds, distinguishing them by the Italic character.

*'Nor think to say here will I stop,  
Here will I fix the limits of transgression,  
Nor farther tempt the avenging rage of heaven.  
When guilt like this once harbours in the breast,  
Those holy beings, whose unseen direction  
Guides through the maze of life the steps of man,  
Fly the detested mansions of impiety,  
And quit their charge to horror and to ruin.'*

A small part only of this interesting admonition is preserved in the play, and is varied, I think, not to advantage:

*'The soul once tainted with so foul a crime,  
No more shall glow with friendship's hallow'd ardour:  
Those holy beings, whose superior care  
Guides erring mortals to the paths of virtue,  
Affrighted at impiety like thine,  
Resign their charge to baseness and to ruin.'*

*'I feel the soft infection  
Flush in my cheek, and wander in my veins.  
Teach me the Grecian art of soft persuasion.'*

*'Sure this is love, which heretofore I conceived the dream of idle maids, and wanton poets.'*

*'Though no comets or prodigies foretold the ruin of Greece, signs which heaven must by another miracle enable us to understand, yet might it be foreshown, by tokens no less certain, by the vices which always bring it on.'*

This last passage is worked up in the tragedy itself, as follows :

LEONTIUS

*'That power that kindly spreads  
The clouds, a signal of impending showers,  
To warn the wand'ring linnet to the shade,  
Beheld, without concern, expiring Greece,  
And not one prodigy, foretold our fate.*

DEMETRIUS

*A thousand horrid prodigies foretold it ;  
A feeble government, eluded laws,  
A factious populace, luxurious nobles,  
And all the maladies of sinking states.  
When public villany, too strong for justice,  
Shows his bold front, the harbinger of ruin,  
Can brave Leontius call for airy wonders,  
Which cheats interpret, and which fools regard ?  
When some neglected fabric nods beneath  
The weight of years, and totters to the tempest,  
Must heaven despatch the messengers of light,  
Or wake the dead, to warn us of its fall ?'*

MAHOMET (to IRENE)

*'I have tried thee, and joy to find that thou deservest to be loved by Mahomet,—with a mind great as his own. Sure, thou art an error of nature, and an exception to the rest of thy sex, and art immortal ; for sentiments like thine were never to sink into nothing. I thought all the thoughts of the fair had been to select the graces of the day, dispose the colours of the flaunting (flowing) robe, tune the voice and roll the eye, place the gem, choose the dress, and add new roses to the fading cheek, but—sparkling.'*

Thus in the tragedy :

‘Illustrious maid, new wonders fix me thine ;  
Thy soul completes the triumphs of thy face ;  
I thought, forgive, my fair, the noblest aim,  
The strongest effort of a female soul  
Was but to choose the graces of the day,  
To tune the tongue, to teach the eyes to roll,  
Dispose the colours of the flowing robe,  
And add new roses to the faded cheek.’

I shall select one other passage, on account of the doctrine which it illustrates. Irene observes,

*‘That the Supreme Being will accept of virtue, whatever outward circumstances it may be accompanied with, and may be delighted with varieties of worship ; but is answered, That variety cannot affect that Being, who, infinitely happy in his own perfections, wants no external gratifications ; nor can infinite truth be delighted with falsehood ; that though he may guide or pity those he leaves in darkness, he abandons those who shut their eyes against the beams of day.’*

Johnson’s residence at Lichfield, on his return to it at this time, was only for three months ; and as he had as yet seen but a small part of the wonders of the metropolis, he had little to tell his townsmen. He related to me the following minute anecdote of this period :—‘In the last age, when my mother lived in London, there were two sets of people, those who gave the wall, and those who took it ; the peaceable and the quarrelsome. When I returned to Lichfield, after having been in London, my mother asked me, whether I was one of those who gave the wall, or those who took it. Now it is fixed that every man keeps to the right ; or, if one is taking the wall, another yields it ; and it is never a dispute.’<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides*, 3rd edit., p. 232.

He now removed to London with Mrs. Johnson: but her daughter, who had lived with them at Edial, was left with her relations in the country. His lodgings were for some time in Woodstock Street, near Hanover Square, and afterwards in Castle Street, near Cavendish Square. As there is something pleasingly interesting, to many, in tracing so great a man through all his different habitations, I shall, before this work is concluded, present my readers with an exact list of his lodgings and houses, in order of time, which, in placid condescension to my respectful curiosity, he one evening dictated to me, but without specifying how long he lived at each. In the progress of his life I shall have occasion to mention some of them as connected with particular incidents, or with the writing of particular parts of his works. To some this minute attention may appear trifling; but when we consider the punctilious exactness with which the different houses in which Milton resided have been traced by the writers of his life, a similar enthusiasm may be pardoned in the biographer of Johnson.

His tragedy being by this time, as he thought, completely finished and fit for the stage, he was very desirous that it should be brought forward. Mr. Peter Garrick told me that Johnson and he went together to the Fountain Tavern, and read it over, and that he afterwards solicited Mr. Fleetwood, the patentee of Drury Lane Theatre, to have it acted at his house; but Mr. Fleetwood would not accept it, probably because it was not patronised by some man of high rank; and it was not acted till 1749, when his friend, David Garrick, was manager of that theatre.

*The Gentleman's Magazine*, begun and carried on

by Mr. Edward Cave, under the name of Sylvanus Urban, had attracted the notice and esteem of Johnson, in an eminent degree, before he came to London as an adventurer in literature. He told me that when he first saw St. John's Gate, the place where that deservedly popular miscellany was originally printed, he 'beheld it with reverence.' I suppose, indeed, that every young author has had the same kind of feeling for the magazine or periodical publication which has first entertained him, and in which he has first had an opportunity to see himself in print, without the risk of exposing his name. I myself recollect such impressions from *The Scots Magazine*, which was begun at Edinburgh in the year 1739, and has been ever conducted with judgment, accuracy, and propriety. I yet cannot help thinking of it with an affectionate regard. Johnson has dignified the *Gentleman's Magazine*, by the importance with which he invests the life of Cave; but he has given it still greater lustre by the various admirable essays which he wrote for it.

Though Johnson was often solicited by his friends to make a complete list of his writings, and talked of doing it, I believe with a serious intention that they should all be collected on his own account, he put it off from year to year, and at last died without having done it perfectly. I have one in his own handwriting which contains a certain number; I indeed doubt if he could have remembered every one of them, as they were so numerous, so various, and scattered in such a multiplicity of unconnected publications; nay, several of them published under the names of other persons, to whom he liberally contributed from the abundance

of his mind. We must, therefore, be content to discover them, partly from occasional information given by him to his friends, and partly from internal evidence.

His first performance in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, which for many years was his principal source for employment and support, was a copy of Latin verses, in March 1738, addressed to the editor in so happy a style of compliment, that Cave must have been destitute both of taste and sensibility, had he not felt himself highly gratified.

*Ad Urbanum*

Urbane, nullis fesse laboribus,  
Urbane, nullis victæ calumniis,  
Cui fronte sertum in erudita  
Perpetuo viret et virebit ;

Quid moliatur gens imitantium,  
Quid et minetur, sollicitus parum,  
Vacare solis perge Musis,  
Juxta animo studiisque felix.

Linguae procasis plumbea spicula,  
Fidens, superbo frange silentio ;  
Vicitrix per obstantes catervas  
Sedulitas animosa tendet.

Intende nervos, fortis, inanibus  
Risurus olim nisibus æmuli ;  
Intende jam nervos, habebis  
Participes operæ Camœnas.

Non ulla Musis pagina gratior,  
Quam quæ severis ludicra jungere  
Novit, fatigatamque nugis  
Utilibus recreare mentem.



Texente Nymphis sarta Lycoride,  
 Rosæ ruborem sic viola adjuvat  
 Immista, sic Iris refulget  
 Æthereis variata fucis.<sup>1</sup> S. J.

It appears that he was now enlisted by Mr. Cave as a regular coadjutor in his magazine, by which he

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<sup>1</sup> A translation of this Ode, by an unknown correspondent, appeared in the Magazine for the month of May following :—

‘Hail Urban! indefatigable man  
 Unwearied yet by all thy useful toil!  
 Whom num’rous slanderers assault in vain;  
 Whom no base calumny can put to foil.  
 But still the laurel on thy learned brow  
 Flourishes fair, and shall for ever grow.

What mean the servile imitating crew,  
 What their vain blust’ring and their empty noise,  
 Ne’er seek: but still thy noble ends pursue,  
 Unconquer’d by the rabble’s venal voice.  
 Still to the Muse thy studious mind apply,  
 Happy in temper as in industry.

The senseless sneerings of a haughty tongue,  
 Unworthy thy attention to engage,  
 Unheeded pass: and though they mean thee wrong,  
 By manly silence disappoint their rage.  
 Assiduous diligence confounds its foes,  
 Resistless, though malicious crowds oppose.

Exert thy powers, nor slacken in the course,  
 Thy spotless fame shall quash all false reports:  
 Exert thy powers, nor fear a rival’s force,  
 But thou shalt smile at all his vain efforts;  
 Thy labours shall be crown’d with large success;  
 The Muses’ aid thy Magazine shall bless.

No page more grateful to th’ harmonious Nine  
 Than that wherein thy labours we survey;  
 Where solemn themes in fuller splendour shine,  
 (Delightful mixture), blended with the gay,  
 Where in improving, various joys we find,  
 A welcome respite to the wearied mind.

Thus when the nymphs in some fair verdant mead,  
 Of various flowers a beauteous wreath compose,  
 The lovely violet’s azure-painted head  
 Adds lustre to the crimson-blushing rose.  
 Thus splendid Iris, with her varied dye,  
 Shines in the æther, and adorns the sky.—BRITON.

probably obtained a tolerable livelihood. At what time, or by what means, he had acquired a competent knowledge both of French and Italian, I do not know ; but he was so well skilled in them as to be sufficiently qualified for a translator. That part of his labour which consisted in emendation and improvement of the productions of other contributors, like that employed in levelling ground, can be perceived only by those who had an opportunity of comparing the original with the altered copy. What we certainly know to have been done by him in this way was the Debates in both Houses of Parliament, under the name of ‘The Senate of Lilliput,’ sometimes with feigned denominations of the several speakers, sometimes with denominations formed of the letters of their real names, in the manner of what is called anagram, so that they might easily be deciphered. Parliament then kept the press in a kind of mysterious awe, which made it necessary to have recourse to such devices. In our time it has acquired an unrestrained freedom, so that the people in all parts of the kingdom have a fair, open, and exact report of the actual proceedings of their representatives and legislators, which in our constitution is highly to be valued ; though, unquestionably, there has of late been too much reason to complain of the petulance with which obscure scribblers have presumed to treat men of the most respectable character and situation.

This important article of the *Gentleman’s Magazine* was, for several years, executed by Mr. William Guthrie, a man who deserves to be respectably recorded in the literary annals of this country. He was descended of an ancient family in Scotland : but

having a small patrimony, and being an adherent of the unfortunate house of Stuart, he could not accept of any office in the State; he therefore came to London, and employed his talents and learning as an 'Author by profession.' His writings in history, criticism, and politics, had considerable merit.<sup>1</sup> He was the first English historian who had recourse to that authentic source of information, the Parliamentary Journals; and such was the power of his political pen, that, at an early period, Government thought it worth their while to keep it quiet by a pension, which he enjoyed till his death. Johnson esteemed him enough to wish that his life should be written. The debates in Parliament, which were brought home and digested by Guthrie, whose memory, though surpassed by others who have since followed him in the same department, was yet very quick and tenacious, were sent by Cave to Johnson for his revision; and after some time, when Guthrie had attained to greater variety of employment, and the speeches were more and more enriched by the accession of Johnson's genius, it was resolved that he should do the whole himself, from the scanty notes furnished by persons employed to attend in both Houses of Parliament. Sometimes, however, as he himself told me, he had nothing more communicated to him than the names of the several speakers, and the part which they had taken in the debate.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> How much poetry he wrote I know not: but he informed me that he was the author of the beautiful little piece, 'The Eagle and Robin Redbreast,' in the collection of poems entitled *The Union*, though it is there said to be written by Archibald Scott, before the year 1600.

<sup>2</sup> [In Lord Chesterfield's *Miscellaneous Works* will be found the very same speech which is also to be found in Johnson's works, *i.e.* if the two volumes of *Parliamentary Debates* are considered as Johnson's exclusive creation.—A. B.]

Thus was Johnson employed during some of the best years of his life, as a mere literary labourer 'for gain, not glory,' solely to obtain an honest support. He, however, indulged himself in occasional little sallies, which the French so happily express by the term *jeux d'esprit*, and which will be noticed in their order, in the progress of this work.

But what first displayed his transcendent powers, and 'gave the world assurance of the man,' was his '*London*, a poem in imitation of the third Satire of Juvenal,' which came out in May this year, and burst forth with splendour, the rays of which will for ever encircle his name. Boileau had imitated the same satire with great success, applying it to Paris: but an attentive comparison will satisfy every reader that he is much excelled by the English Juvenal. Oldham had also imitated it, and applied it to London: all which performances concur to prove that great cities in every age and in every country will furnish similar topics of satire. Whether Johnson had previously read Oldham's imitation I do not know; but it is not a little remarkable that there is scarcely any coincidence found between the two performances, though upon the very same subject. The only instances are in describing London as the *sink* of foreign worthlessness:

'the common shore,  
Where France does all her filth and ordure pour.'—OLDHAM.  
'The common shore of Paris and of Rome.'—JOHNSON.  
and,

'No calling or profession comes amiss,  
A needy *monsieur* can be what he please.'—OLDHAM.  
'All sciences a *fasting monsieur* knows.'—JOHNSON.

The particulars which Oldham has collected, both as exhibiting the horrors of London and of the times, contrasted with better days, are different from those of Johnson, and in general well chosen and well expressed.<sup>1</sup>

There are in Oldham's imitation many prosaic verses and bad rhymes, and his poem sets out with a strange inadvertent blunder :

'Though much concern'd to *leave* my dear old friend,  
I must, however, *his* design commend  
Of fixing in the country——'

It is plain he was not going to leave his *friend* ; his friend was going to leave *him*. A young lady at once corrected this with good critical sagacity to

'Though much concern'd to *lose* my dear old friend.'

There is one passage in the original better transfused by Oldham than by Johnson :

'Nil habet infelix paupertas durius in se,  
Quam quod ridiculos homines facit.'—v. 152.

which is an exquisite remark on the galling meanness and contempt annexed to poverty : Johnson's imitation is :

'Of all the griefs that harass the distrest,  
Sure the most bitter is a scornful jest.'

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<sup>1</sup> I own it pleased me to find amongst them one trait of the manners of the age in London in the last century, to shield from the sneer of English ridicule what was some time ago too common a practice in my native city of Edinburgh !

'If what I've said can't from the town affright,  
Consider other *dangers of the night* ;  
When brickbats are from upper stories thrown,  
And *emptied chamber-pots come pouring down*  
From garret windows.'

Oldham's, though less elegant, is more just :

'Nothing in poverty so ill is borne,  
As its exposing men to grinning scorn.'

Where, or in what manner this poem was composed, I am sorry that I neglected to ascertain with precision from Johnson's own authority. He has marked upon his corrected copy of the first edition of it, 'Written in 1738'; and, as it was published in the month of May in that year, it is evident that much time was not employed in preparing it for the press. The history of its publication I am enabled to give in a very satisfactory manner; and, judging from myself and many of my friends, I trust that it will not be uninteresting to my readers.

We may be certain, though it is not expressly named in the following letters to Mr. Cave, in 1738, that they all relate to it :

TO MR. CAVE

*'Castle Street, Wednesday Morning.*

[*No date. 1738.*]

'SIR,—When I took the liberty of writing to you a few days ago I did not expect a repetition of the same pleasure so soon; for a pleasure I shall always think it to converse in any manner with an ingenious and candid man; but having the enclosed poem in my hands to dispose of for the benefit of the author (of whose abilities I shall say nothing, since I send you his performance), I believed I could not procure more advantageous terms from any person than from you, who have so much distinguished yourself by your generous encouragement of poetry; and whose judgment of that art nothing but your commendation of my trifle<sup>1</sup> can give me any occasion to call in question. I do not doubt but you will look over this poem with another eye, and reward it in a different manner from

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<sup>1</sup> His Ode, *Ad Urbanum*, probably.—NICHOLS.]

a mercenary bookseller, who counts the lines he is to purchase, and considers nothing but the bulk. I cannot help taking notice that, besides what the author may hope for on account of his abilities, he has likewise another claim to your regard, as he lies at present under very disadvantageous circumstances of fortune. I beg, therefore, that you will favour me with a letter to-morrow, that I may know what you can afford to allow him, that he may either part with it to you, or find out (which I do not expect) some other way more to his satisfaction.

‘I have only to add that, as I am sensible I have transcribed it very coarsely, which, after having altered it, I was obliged to do, I will, if you please to transmit the sheets from the press, correct it for you, and take the trouble of altering any stroke of satire which you may dislike.

‘By exerting on this occasion your usual generosity, you will not only encourage learning and relieve distress, but (though it be in comparison of the other motives of very small account) oblige in a very sensible manner, sir, your very humble servant,  
SAM. JOHNSON.’

TO MR. CAVE

‘*Monday, No. 6 Castle Street.*

‘SIR,—I am to return you thanks for the present you were so kind as to send by me, and to entreat that you will be pleased to inform me by the penny post whether you resolve to print the poem. If you please to send it me by the post, with a note to Dodsley, I will go and read the lines to him, that we may have his consent to put his name in the title-page. As to the printing, if it can be set immediately about, I will be so much the author’s friend as not to content myself with mere solicitations in his favour. I propose, if my calculation be near the truth, to engage for the reimbursement of all that you shall lose by an impression of 500, provided, as you very generously propose, that the profit, if any, be set aside for the author’s use, excepting the present you made, which, if he be a gainer, it is fit he should repay. I beg that you will let one of your servants write an exact account of the expense of such an impression, and send it with the poem, that I may know what I engage for. I am very sensible, from

your generosity on this occasion, of your regard to learning, even in its unhappiest state; and cannot but think such a temper deserving of the gratitude of those who suffer so often from a contrary disposition.—I am, sir, your most humble servant,

SAM. JOHNSON.'

TO MR. CAVE

[No date.]

'SIR,—I waited on you to take the copy to Dodsley's: as I remember the number of lines which it contains, it will be no longer than *Eugenio*,<sup>1</sup> with the quotations, which must be subjoined at the bottom of the page, part of the beauty of the performance (if any beauty be allowed it) consisting in adapting Juvenal's sentiments to modern facts and persons. It will, with those additions, very conveniently make five sheets. And since the expense will be no more, I shall contentedly insure it, as I mentioned in my last. If it be not therefore gone to Dodsley's, I beg it may be sent me by the penny post, that I may have it in the evening. I have composed a Greek Epigram to Eliza,<sup>2</sup> and think she ought to be celebrated in as many different languages as Lewis le Grand. Pray send me word when you begin upon the poem, for it is a long way to walk. I would leave my Epigram, but have not daylight to transcribe it.—I am, sir, yours, etc.,

SAM. JOHNSON.'

TO MR. CAVE

[No date.]

'SIR,—I am extremely obliged by your kind letter, and will not fail to attend you to-morrow with *Irene*, who looks upon you as one of her best friends.

'I was to-day with Mr. Dodsley, who declares very warmly in favour of the paper you sent him, which he desires to have a share in, it being, as he says, *a creditable thing to be concerned in*. I knew not what answer to make till I had consulted you, nor what to demand on the author's part, but am very willing that, if you please, he should have a part in it,

<sup>1</sup> A poem, published in 1737, of which see an account in vol. ii., under April 30, 1773.

<sup>2</sup> [The learned Mrs. Elizabeth Carter. This lady, of whom frequent mention will be found in these Memoirs, was daughter of Nicholas Carter, D.D. She died in Clarges Street, Feb. 19, 1806, in her eighty-ninth year.—M.]



as he will undoubtedly be more diligent to disperse and promote it. If you can send me word to-morrow what I shall say to him, I will settle matters, and bring the poem with me for the press, which, as town empties, we cannot be too quick with.—I am, sir, yours, etc.,  
SAM. JOHNSON.'

To us who have long known the manly force, bold spirit, and masterly versification of this poem, it is a matter of curiosity to observe the diffidence with which its author brought it forward into public notice, while he is so cautious as not to avow it to be his own production; and with what humility he offers to allow the printer to 'alter any stroke of satire which he might dislike.' That any such alteration was made, we do not know. If we did, we could not but feel an indignant regret; but how painful is it to see that a writer of such vigorous powers of mind was actually in such distress that the small profit which so short a poem, however excellent, could yield, was courted as a 'relief.'

It has been generally said, I know not with what truth, that Johnson offered his *London* to several booksellers, none of whom would purchase it. To this circumstance Mr. Derrick alludes in the following lines of his *Fortune, a Rhapsody*:

'Will no kind patron Johnson own?  
Shall Johnson friendless range the town?  
And every publisher refuse  
The offspring of his happy Muse?'

But we have seen that the worthy, modest, and ingenious Mr. Robert Dodsley had taste enough to perceive its uncommon merit, and thought it creditable to have a share in it. The fact is that at a future conference he bargained for the whole property of it,

for which he gave Johnson ten guineas, who told me, 'I might perhaps have accepted of less; but that Paul Whitehead had a little before got ten guineas for a poem; and I would not take less than Paul Whitehead.'

I may here observe that Johnson appeared to me to undervalue Paul Whitehead upon every occasion when he was mentioned, and in my opinion did not do him justice; but when it is considered that Paul Whitehead was a member of a riotous and profane club, we may account for Johnson's having a prejudice against him. Paul Whitehead was, indeed, unfortunate in being not only slighted by Johnson, but violently attacked by Churchill, who utters the following imprecation:

'May I (can worse disgrace on manhood fall?)  
Be born a Whitehead, and baptized a Paul!'

yet I shall never be persuaded to think meanly of the author of so brilliant and pointed a satire as *Manners*.

Johnson's *London* was published in May 1738;<sup>1</sup> and it is remarkable that it came out on the same morning with Pope's satire, entitled '1738'; so that England had at once its Juvenal and Horace as

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<sup>1</sup> Sir John Hawkins, p. 86, tells us, 'The event is *antedated* in the poem of *London*: but in every particular, except the difference of a year, what is there said of the departure of Thales must be understood of Savage, and looked upon as *true history*.' This conjecture is, I believe, entirely groundless. I have been assured that Johnson said he was not so much as acquainted with Savage when he wrote his *London*. If the departure mentioned in it was the departure of Savage, the event was not *antedated* but *foreseen*; for *London* was published in May 1738, and Savage did not set out for Wales till July 1739. However well Johnson could defend the credibility of *second sight*, he did not pretend that he himself was possessed of that faculty.

[The assertion that Johnson was not even acquainted with Savage when he published his *London* may be doubtful. Johnson took leave of Savage when he went to Wales in 1739, and must have been acquainted with him before that period. See his *Life of Savage*.—A. C.]



*Paul Whitehead*



poetical monitors. The Reverend Dr. Douglas, now Bishop of Salisbury, to whom I am indebted for some obliging communications, was then a student at Oxford, and remembers well the effect which *London* produced. Everybody was delighted with it; and there being no name to it, the first buzz of the literary circles was, 'Here is an unknown poet, greater even than Pope.' And it is recorded in the *Gentleman's Magazine* of that year<sup>1</sup> that it 'got to the second edition in the course of a week.'

One of the warmest patrons of this poem on its first appearance was General Oglethorpe, whose 'strong benevolence of soul' was unabated during the course of a very long life; though it is painful to think that he had but too much reason to become cold and callous, and discontented with the world, from the neglect which he experienced of his public and private worth by those in whose power it was to gratify so gallant a veteran with marks of distinction. This extraordinary person was as remarkable for his learning and taste as for his other eminent qualities; and no man was more prompt, active, and generous in encouraging merit. I have heard Johnson gratefully acknowledge, in his presence, the kind and effectual support which he gave to his *London*, though unacquainted with its author.

Pope, who then filled the poetical throne without a rival, it may reasonably be presumed, must have been particularly struck by the sudden appearance of such a poet; and, to his credit, let it be remembered that his feelings and conduct on the occasion were

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<sup>1</sup> Page 269.

candid and liberal. He requested Mr. Richardson, son of the painter, to endeavour to find out who this new author was. Mr. Richardson, after some inquiry, having informed him that he had discovered only that his name was Johnson, and that he was some obscure man, Pope said, ‘He will soon be *déterré*.’<sup>1</sup> We shall presently see, from a note written by Pope, that he was himself afterwards more successful in his inquiries than his friend.

That in this justly celebrated poem may be found a few rhymes which the critical precision of English prosody at this day would disallow, cannot be denied ; but with this small imperfection, which in the general blaze of its excellence is not perceived, till the mind has subsided into cool attention, it is undoubtedly one of the noblest productions in our language, both for sentiment and expression. The nation was then in that ferment against the Court and the Ministry which some years after ended in the downfall of Sir Robert Walpole ; and as it has been said that Tories are Whigs when out of place, and Whigs Tories when in place ; so, as a Whig Administration ruled with what force it could, a Tory Opposition had all the animation and all the eloquence of resistance to power, aided by the common topics of patriotism, liberty, and independence ! Accordingly we find in Johnson’s *London* the most spirited invectives against tyranny and oppression, the warmest predilection for his own country, and the purest love of virtue ; interspersed with traits of his own particular character and situation, not omitting his prejudices as a ‘true-born

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<sup>1</sup> Sir Joshua Reynolds, from the information of the younger Richardson.

Englishman,'<sup>1</sup> not only against foreign countries, but against Ireland and Scotland. On some of these topics I shall quote a few passages :—

'The cheated nation's happy fav'rites see ;  
Mark whom the great caress, who frown on me.'

'Has heaven reserved, in pity to the poor,  
No pathless waste, or undiscover'd shore ?  
No secret island in the boundless main ?  
No peaceful desert yet unclaim'd by Spain ?  
Quick let us rise, the happy seats explore,  
And bear Oppression's insolence no more.'

'How, when competitors like these contend,  
Can *sultry Virtue* hope to find a friend ?'

'This mournful truth is everywhere confess'd,  
SLOW RISES WORTH, BY POVERTY DEPRESS'D !'

We may easily conceive with what feeling a great mind like his, cramped and galled by narrow circumstances, uttered this last line, which he marked by capitals. The whole of the poem is eminently excellent, and there are in it such proofs of a knowledge of the world, and of a mature acquaintance with life, as cannot be contemplated without wonder, when we consider that he was then only in his twenty-ninth year, and had yet been so little in the 'busy haunts of men.'

Yet, while we admire the poetical excellence of this poem, candour obliges us to allow that the flame of patriotism and zeal for popular resistance with which it is fraught, had no just cause. There was,

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<sup>1</sup> It is, however, remarkable, that he uses the epithet which, undoubtedly, since the union between England and Scotland, ought to denominate the natives of both parts of our island :

'Was early taught a BRITON's rights to prize.

in truth, *no* 'oppression'; the 'nation' was *not* 'cheated.' Sir Robert Walpole was a wise and a benevolent Minister, who thought that the happiness and prosperity of a commercial country like ours would be best promoted by peace, which he accordingly maintained with credit during a very long period. Johnson himself afterwards honestly acknowledged the merit of Walpole, whom he called 'a fixed star'; while he characterised his opponent, Pitt, as 'a meteor.' But Johnson's juvenile poem was naturally impregnated with the fire of opposition, and upon every account was universally admired.

Though thus elevated into fame, and conscious of uncommon powers, he had not that bustling confidence, or, I may rather say, that animated ambition, which one might have supposed would have urged him to endeavour at rising in life. But such was his inflexible dignity of character that he would not stoop to court the great; without which hardly any man has made his way to a high station. He could not expect to produce many such works as his *London*, and he felt the hardships of writing for bread; he was, therefore, willing to resume the office of a schoolmaster, so as to have a sure, though moderate, income for his life; and an offer being made to him of the mastership of a school,<sup>1</sup> provided he could obtain the

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<sup>1</sup> In a billet written by Mr. Pope in the following year, this school is said to have been in *Shropshire*; but as it appears from a letter from Earl Gower that the trustees of it were 'some worthy gentlemen in Johnson's neighbourhood,' I in my first edition suggested that Pope must have, by mistake, written *Shropshire* instead of *Staffordshire*. But I have since been obliged to Mr. Spearing, attorney-at-law, for the following information:—'William Adams, formerly citizen and haberdasher of London, founded a school at Newport, in the county of Salop, by deed dated 27th of November 1656, by which he granted "the yearly sum of *sixty pounds* to such able and learned schoolmaster, from time



degree of Master of Arts, Dr. Adams was applied to, by a common friend, to know whether that could be granted him as a favour from the University of Oxford. But though he had made such a figure in the literary world, it was then thought too great a favour to be asked.

Pope, without any knowledge of him but from his *London*, recommended him to Earl Gower, who endeavoured to procure for him a degree from Dublin, by the following letter to a friend of Dean Swift :

to time, being of godly life and conversation, who should have been educated at one of the Universities of Oxford or Cambridge, and had taken the degree of *Master of Arts*, and was well read in the Greek and Latin tongues, as should be nominated from time to time by the said William Adams during his life ; and after the decease of the said William Adams by the governors (namely, the Master and Wardens of the Haberdashers' Company of the city of London) and their successors." The manor and lands out of which the revenues for the maintenance of the school were to issue are situate *at Knighton and Adbaston, in the county of Stafford.* From the foregoing account of this foundation, particularly the circumstances of the salary being sixty pounds, and the degree of Master of Arts being a requisite qualification in the teacher, it seemed probable that this was the school in contemplation ; and that Lord Gower erroneously supposed that the gentlemen who possessed the lands, out of which the revenues issued, were trustees of the charity.

Such was probable conjecture. But in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for May 1793, there is a letter from Mr. Henn, one of the masters of the school of Appleby, in Leicestershire, in which he writes as follows :—

'I compared time and circumstance together, in order to discover whether the school in question might not be this of Appleby. Some of the trustees at that period were "worthy gentlemen of the neighbourhood of Lichfield." Appleby itself is not far from the neighbourhood of Lichfield: the salary, the degree requisite, together with the *time of election*, all agreeing with the statutes of Appleby. The election, as said in the letter, "could not be delayed longer than the 11th of next month," which was the 11th of September, just three months after the annual audit-day of Appleby school, which is always on the 11th of June : and the statutes enjoin, *ne ullius præceptorum electio diutius tribus mensibus moraretur*, etc.

'These I thought to be convincing proofs that my conjecture was not ill-founded, and that in a future edition of that book the circumstance might be recorded as fact.

'But what banishes every shadow of doubt is the *Minute-book* of the school, which declares the headmastership to be *at that time VACANT.*'

I cannot omit returning thanks to this learned gentleman for the very handsome manner in which he has in that letter been so good as to speak of this work.

'SIR,—Mr. Samuel Johnson (author of *London*, a satire, and some other poetical pieces) is a native of this country, and much respected by some worthy gentlemen in his neighbourhood, who are trustees of a charity-school now vacant. The certain salary is sixty pounds a year, of which they are desirous to make him master ; but, unfortunately, he is not capable of receiving their bounty, which *would make him happy for life*, by not being a *Master of Arts*, which, by the statutes of this school, the master of it must be.

'Now these gentlemen do me the honour to think that I have interest enough in you, to prevail upon you to write to Dean Swift, to persuade the University of Dublin to send a diploma to me, constituting this poor man Master of Arts in their University. They highly extol the man's learning and probity, and will not be persuaded that the University will make any difficulty of conferring such a favour upon a stranger if he is recommended by the Dean. They say he is not afraid of the strictest examination, though he is of so long a journey, and will venture it if the Dean thinks it necessary, choosing rather to die upon the road *than be starved to death in translating for booksellers*, which has been his only subsistence for some time past.

'I fear there is more difficulty in this affair than those good-natured gentlemen apprehend, especially as their election cannot be delayed longer than the 11th of next month. If you see this matter in the same light that it appears to me, I hope you will burn this, and pardon me for giving you so much trouble about an impracticable thing ; but if you think there is a probability of obtaining the favour asked, I am sure your humanity, and propensity to relieve merit in distress, will incline you to serve the poor man, without my adding any more to the trouble I have already given you, than assuring you that I am, with great truth, sir, your faithful servant, GOWER.

'TRENTHAM, Aug. 1, 1739.'

It was, perhaps, no small disappointment to Johnson that this respectable application had not the desired effect : yet how much reason has there been, both for himself and his country, to rejoice that it did not succeed, as he might probably have wasted in

obscurity those hours in which he afterwards produced his incomparable works.

About this time he made one other effort to emancipate himself from the drudgery of authorship. He applied to Dr. Adams, to consult Dr. Smallbroke of the Commons, whether a person might be permitted to practise as an advocate there, without a doctor's degree in Civil Law. 'I am (said he) a total stranger to these studies; but whatever is a profession, and maintains numbers, must be within the reach of common abilities, and some degree of industry.' Dr. Adams was much pleased with Johnson's design to employ his talents in that manner, being confident he would have attained to great eminence. And, indeed, I cannot conceive a man better qualified to make a distinguished figure as a lawyer; for, he would have brought to his profession a rich store of various knowledge, an uncommon acuteness, and a command of language, in which few could have equalled, and none have surpassed, him. He who could display eloquence and wit in defence of the decision of the House of Commons upon Mr. Wilkes's election for Middlesex, and of the unconstitutional taxation of our fellow-subjects in America, must have been a powerful advocate in any cause. But here, also, the want of a degree was an insurmountable bar.

He was therefore under the necessity of persevering in that course into which he had been forced; and we find that his proposal from Greenwich to Mr. Cave, for a translation of Father Paul Sarpi's History, was accepted.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In the *Weekly Miscellany*, October 21, 1738, there appeared the following advertisement: 'Just published, proposals for printing the

Some sheets of this translation were printed off, but the design was dropped; for it happened, oddly enough, that another person of the name of Samuel Johnson, Librarian of St. Martin's-in-the-Fields, and curate of that parish, engaged in the same undertaking, and was patronised by the clergy, particularly by Dr. Pierce, afterwards Bishop of Rochester. Several light skirmishes passed between the rival translators in the newspapers of the day, and the consequence was that they destroyed each other, for neither of them went on with the work. It is much to be regretted that the able performance of that celebrated genius, Fra Paolo, lost the advantage of being incorporated into British literature by the masterly hand of Johnson.

I have in my possession, by the favour of Mr. John Nichols, a paper in Johnson's handwriting, entitled, 'Account between Mr. Edward Cave and Sam. Johnson, in relation to a version of Father Paul, etc., begun August the 2nd, 1738'; by which it appears that from that day to the 21st of April 1739, Johnson received for this work £49, 7s. in sums of one, two, three, and sometimes four guineas at a time, most

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*History of the Council of Trent*, translated from the Italian of Father Paul Sarpi; with the Author's Life, and Notes theological, historical, and critical, from the French edition of Dr. Le Courayer. To which are added, 'Observations on the History, and Notes and Illustrations from various Authors, both printed and manuscript. By S. Johnson.'

1. The work will consist of two hundred sheets, and be in two volumes in quarto, printed on good paper and letter. 2. The price will be 18s. each volume, to be paid half a guinea at the delivery of the first volume, and the rest at the delivery of the second volume in sheets. 3. Twopence to be abated for every sheet less than two hundred. It may be had on a large paper, in three volumes, at the price of three guineas; one to be paid at the time of subscribing, another at the delivery of the first, and the rest at the delivery of the other volumes. The work is now in the press, and will be diligently prosecuted. Subscriptions are taken in by Mr. Dodsley in Pall Mall, Mr. Rivington in St. Paul's Churchyard, by E. Cave at St. John's Gate, and the Translator, at No. 6 in Castle Street, by Cavendish Square.

frequently two. And it is curious to observe the minute and scrupulous accuracy with which Johnson had pasted upon it a slip of paper, which he has entitled 'Small Account,' and which contains one article, 'Sept. 9th, Mr. Cave laid down 2s. 6d.' There is subjoined to this account a list of some subscribers to the work, partly in Johnson's handwriting, partly in that of another person; and there follows a leaf or two on which are written a number of characters which have the appearance of a short hand, which, perhaps, Johnson was then trying to learn.

TO MR. CAVE

*Wednesday.*

'SIR,—I did not care to detain your servant while I wrote an answer to your letter, in which you seem to insinuate that I had promised more than I am ready to perform. If I have raised your expectations by anything that may have escaped my memory, I am sorry, and if you remind me of it shall thank you for the favour. If I made fewer alterations than usual in the Debates, it was only because there appeared, and still appears to be, less need of alteration. The verses to Lady Firebrace<sup>1</sup> may be had when you please, for you know that such a subject neither deserves much thought nor requires it.

'The Chinese Stories<sup>2</sup> may be had folded down when you please to send, in which I do not recollect that you desired any alterations to be made.

'An answer to another query I am very willing to write, and had consulted with you about it last night if there had been time, for I think it the most proper way of inviting such a correspondence as may be an advantage to the paper, not a load upon it.

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<sup>1</sup> They afterwards appeared in the *Gentleman's Magazine* with this title, 'Verses to Lady Firebrace, at Bury Assizes.'

<sup>2</sup> [Du Halde's *Description of China* was then publishing by Mr. Cave in weekly numbers, whence Johnson was to select pieces for the embellishment of the Magazine.—NICHOLS.]

'As to the prize verses, a backwardness to determine their degrees of merit is not peculiar to me. You may, if you please, still have what I can say, but I shall engage with little spirit in an affair which I shall *hardly* end to my own satisfaction, and *certainly* not to the satisfaction of the parties concerned.<sup>1</sup>

'As to Father Paul, I have not yet been just to my proposal, but have met with impediments, which I hope are now at an end; and if you find the progress hereafter not such as you have a right to expect, you can easily stimulate a negligent translator.

'If any or all of these have contributed to your discontent, I will endeavour to remove it, and desire you to propose the question to which you wish for an answer.—I am, sir, your humble servant,  
SAM. JOHNSON.'

## TO MR. CAVE

[No date.]

'SIR,—I am pretty much of your opinion, that the Commentary cannot be prosecuted with any appearance of success, for as the names of the authors concerned are of more weight in the performance than its own intrinsic merit, the public will be soon satisfied with it. And I think the *Examen* should be pushed forward with the utmost expedition. Thus 'This day, etc., An Examen of Mr. Pope's Essay, etc., containing a succinct Account of the Philosophy of Mr. Leibnitz on the System of the Fatalists, with a Confutation of their Opinions and an Illustration of the Doctrine of Free-will' (with what else you think proper).

'It will, above all, be necessary to take notice that it is a thing distinct from the Commentary.

'I was so far from imagining they stood still<sup>2</sup> that I conceived them to have a good deal beforehand, and therefore was less anxious in providing them more. But if ever they stand still on my account, it must doubtless be charged to me, and whatever else shall be reasonable I shall not oppose, but beg a suspense of judgment till morning, when I must entreat

<sup>1</sup> [The premium of forty pounds proposed for the best poem on the Divine Attributes is here alluded to.—NICHOLS.]

<sup>2</sup> [The compositors in Mr. Cave's printing-office, who appear by this letter to have then waited for copy.—NICHOLS.]

you to send me a dozen proposals, and you shall then have copy to spare.—I am, sir, yours, *impransus*,

‘SAM. JOHNSON.

‘Pray muster up the proposals if you can, or let the boy recall them from the booksellers.’

But although he corresponded with Mr. Cave concerning a translation of Crousaz’s *Examen of Pope’s Essay on Man*, and gave advice as one anxious for its success, I was long ago convinced by a perusal of the preface that this translation was erroneously ascribed to him, and I have found this point ascertained beyond all doubt by the following article in Dr. Birch’s manuscripts in the British Museum :

‘ELISÆ CARTERÆ, S. P. D. THOMAS BIRCH

‘*Versionem tuam Examinis Crousaziani jam perlegi. Summam styli et elegantiam, et in re difficilimâ proprietatem, admiratus.*

‘*Dabam Novemb. 27, 1738.*’<sup>1</sup>

Indeed, Mrs. Carter has lately acknowledged to Mr. Seward that she was the translator of the *Examen*.

It is remarkable that Johnson’s last-quoted letter to Mr. Cave concludes with a fair confession that he had not a dinner ; and it is no less remarkable that, though in this state of want himself, his benevolent heart was not insensible to the necessities of an humble labourer in literature, as appears from the very next letter :

TO MR. CAVE

[*No date.*]

‘DEAR SIR,—You may remember I have formerly talked with you about a Military Dictionary. The eldest Mr. Macbean, who was with Mr. Chambers, has very good materials for such a work, which I have seen, and will do it at a very

<sup>1</sup> *Birch MSS.*, Brit. Mus. 4323.

low rate. I think the terms of war and navigation might be comprised, with good explanations, in one 8vo pica, which he is willing to do for 12s. a sheet, to be made up a guinea at the second impression. If you think on it, I will wait on you with him.—I am, sir, your humble servant,

‘SAM. JOHNSON.

‘Pray lend me Topsel on Animals.’

I must not omit to mention that this Mr. Macbean was a native of Scotland.

In the *Gentleman's Magazine* of this year Johnson gave a *Life of Father Paul*, and he wrote the Preface to the volume, which, though prefixed to it when bound, is always published with the appendix, and is therefore the last composition belonging to it. The ability and nice adaptation with which he could draw up a prefatory address was one of his peculiar excellencies.

It appears, too, that he paid a friendly attention to Mrs. Elizabeth Carter; for in a letter from Mr. Cave to Dr. Birch, November 28 this year, I find ‘Mr. Johnson advises Miss C. to undertake a translation of *Boethius de Cons.*, because there is prose and verse, and to put her name to it when published.’ This advice was not followed, probably from an apprehension that the work was not sufficiently popular for an extensive sale. How well Johnson himself could have executed a translation of this philosophical poet we may judge from the following specimen, which he has given in the *Rambler* (*Motto to No. 7*):

‘*O qui perpetuū mundum ratione gubernas,  
Terrarum cœlique sator!—  
Disjice terrenæ nebulas et pondera molis,  
Atque tuo splendore mica! Tu namque serenum,  
Tu requies tranquilla piis. Te cernere finis,  
Principium, vector, dux, semita, terminus, idem.*’



'O Thou whose power o'er moving worlds presides,  
 Whose voice created, and whose wisdom guides,  
 On darkling man in pure effulgence shine,  
 And cheer the clouded mind with light divine.  
 'Tis thine alone to calm the pious breast,  
 With silent confidence and holy rest ;  
 From thee, great God ! we spring, to thee we tend,  
 Path, motive, guide, original, and end !'

In 1739, beside the assistance which he gave to the Parliamentary Debates, his writings in the *Gentleman's Magazine* were, 'The Life of Boerhaave,' in which it is to be observed that he discovers that love of chemistry which never forsook him ; 'An Appeal to the Public in behalf of the Editor' ; 'An Address to the Reader' ; 'An Epigram both in Greek and Latin to Eliza,' and also English verses to her ; and 'A Greek Epigram to Dr. Birch.' It has been erroneously supposed that an essay published in that Magazine this year, entitled, 'The Apotheosis of Milton,' was written by Johnson, and on that supposition it has been improperly inserted in the edition of his works by the booksellers after his decease. Were there no positive testimony as to this point, the style of the performance, and the name of Shakespeare not being mentioned in an essay professedly reviewing the principal English poets, would ascertain it not to be the production of Johnson ; but there is here no occasion to resort to internal evidence, for my Lord Bishop of Salisbury (Dr. Douglas) has assured me that it was written by Guthrie. His separate publications were : 'A Complete Vindication of the Licensers of the Stage from the malicious and scandalous Aspersions of Mr. Brook, author of *Gustavus Vasa*,' being an ironical attack upon them for the

suppression of that tragedy, and *Marmor Norfolciense*; or, an Essay on an ancient prophetic Inscription, in Monkish Rhyme, lately discovered near Lynne in Norfolk, by Probus Britannicus. In this performance he, in a feigned inscription. supposed to have been found in Norfolk, the county of Sir Robert Walpole, then the obnoxious prime minister of this country, inveighs against the Brunswick succession and the measures of government consequent upon it.<sup>1</sup> To this supposed prophecy he added a Commentary, making each expression apply to the times, with warm Anti-Hanoverian zeal.

This anonymous pamphlet, I believe, did not make so much noise as was expected, and therefore had not a very extensive circulation. Sir John Hawkins relates that 'warrants were issued and messengers employed to apprehend the author, who, though he had forborne to subscribe his name to the pamphlet, the vigilance of those in pursuit of him had discovered,' and we are informed that he lay concealed in Lambeth Marsh till the scent after him grew cold. This, however, is altogether without foundation, for Mr. Steele, one of the Secretaries of the Treasury, who, amidst a variety of important business, politely obliged me with his attention to my inquiry, informed me 'that he directed every possible search to be made in the records of the Treasury and Secretary of State's Office, but could find no trace whatever of any warrant having been issued to apprehend the author of this pamphlet.'

*Marmor Norfolciense* became exceedingly scarce,

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<sup>1</sup> The inscription and the translation of it are preserved in the *London Magazine* for the year 1739, p. 244.

so that I for many years endeavoured in vain to procure a copy of it. At last I was indebted to the malice of one of Johnson's numerous petty adversaries, who, in 1775, published a new edition of it, 'with Notes and a Dedication to Samuel Johnson, LL.D., by Tribunus,' in which some puny scribbler invidiously attempted to found upon it a charge of inconsistency against its author because he had accepted of a pension from his present Majesty and had written in support of the measures of the Government. As a mortification to such impotent malice, of which there are so many instances towards men of eminence, I am happy to relate that this *telum imbellè* did not reach its exalted object till about a year after it thus appeared, when I mentioned it to him, supposing that he knew of the republication. To my surprise he had not yet heard of it. He requested me to go directly and get it for him, which I did. He looked at it and laughed, and seemed to be much diverted with the feeble efforts of his unknown adversary, who, I hope, is alive to read this account. 'Now (said he), here is somebody who thinks he has vexed me sadly; yet if it had not been for you, you rogue, I should probably never have seen it.'

As Mr. Pope's note concerning Johnson, alluded to in a former page, refers both to his *London* and his *Marmor Norfolciense*, I have deferred inserting it till now. I am indebted for it to Dr. Percy, the Bishop of Dromore, who permitted me to copy it from the original in his possession. It was presented to his Lordship by Sir Joshua Reynolds, to whom it was given by the son of Mr. Richardson the painter, the person to whom it is addressed. I have

transcribed it with minute exactness, that the peculiar mode of writing and imperfect spelling of that celebrated poet may be exhibited to the curious in literature. It justifies Swift's epithet of 'paper-sparing Pope,' for it is written on a slip no larger than a common message-card, and was sent to Mr. Richardson along with the imitation of Juvenal.

'This is imitated by one Johnson who put in for a Public-school in Shropshire, but was disappointed. He has an infirmity of the convulsive kind, that attacks him sometimes, so as to make Him a sad Spectacle. Mr. P. from the Merit of This Work which was all the knowledge he had of Him endeavoured to serve Him without his own application; & wrote to my L<sup>d</sup>. gore, but he did not succeed. Mr. Johnson published afterw<sup>ds</sup>. another Poem in Latin with Notes the whole very Humorous call'd the Norfolk Prophecy. P.'

Johnson had been told of this note, and Sir Joshua Reynolds informed him of the compliment which it contained, but, from delicacy, avoided showing him the paper itself. When Sir Joshua observed to Johnson that he seemed very desirous to see Pope's note, he answered, 'Who would not be proud to have such a man as Pope so solicitous in inquiring about him?'

The infirmity to which Mr. Pope alludes appeared to me also, as I have elsewhere<sup>1</sup> observed, to be of the convulsive kind, and of the nature of that distemper called St. Vitus's dance; and in this opinion I am confirmed by the description which Sydenham gives of that disease: 'This disorder is a kind of convulsion. It manifests itself by halting or unsteadiness of one of the legs, which the patient draws after him like an

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<sup>1</sup> *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides.*

idiot. If the hand of the same side be applied to the breast or any other part of the body, he cannot keep it a moment in the same posture, but it will be drawn into a different one by a convulsion, notwithstanding all his efforts to the contrary.' Sir Joshua Reynolds, however, was of a different opinion, and favoured me with the following paper :

'Those motions or tricks of Dr. Johnson are improperly called convulsions. He could sit motionless, when he was told so to do, as well as any other man. My opinion is that it proceeded from a habit<sup>1</sup> which he had indulged himself in, of accompanying his thoughts with certain untoward actions, and those actions always appeared to me as if they were meant to reprobate some part of his past conduct. Whenever he was not engaged in conversation, such thoughts were sure to rush into his mind, and for this reason any company, any employment whatever, he preferred to being alone. The great business of his life (he said) was to escape from himself; this disposition he considered as the disease of his mind, which nothing cured but company.

'One instance of his absence and particularity, as it is characteristic of the man, may be worth relating. When he and I took a journey together into the West, we visited the late Mr. Banks, of Dorsetshire. The conversation turning upon pictures, which Johnson could not well see, he retired to a corner of the room, stretching out his right leg as far as he could reach before him, then bringing up his left leg, and stretching his right still further on. The old gentleman observing him, went up to him, and in a very courteous manner assured him, though it was not a new house, the flooring was perfectly safe. The Doctor started from his reverie like a person waked out of his sleep, but spoke not a word.'

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<sup>1</sup> [Sir Joshua Reynolds's notion on this subject is confirmed by what Johnson himself said to a young lady, the niece of his friend, Christopher Smart. See a note by Mr. Boswell on some particulars communicated by Reynolds in vol. iv., under March 30, 1783.—M.]

While we are on this subject, my readers may not be displeased with another anecdote, communicated to me by the same friend, from the relation of Mr. Hogarth.

Johnson used to be a pretty frequent visitor at the house of Mr. Richardson, author of *Clarissa*, and other novels of extensive reputation. Mr. Hogarth came one day to see Richardson, soon after the execution of Dr. Cameron, for having taken arms for the house of Stuart in 1745-6, and being a warm partisan of George the Second, he observed to Richardson, that certainly there must have been some very unfavourable circumstances lately discovered in this particular case, which had induced the King to approve of an execution for rebellion so long after the time when it was committed, as this had the appearance of putting a man to death in cold blood,<sup>1</sup> and was very unlike his Majesty's usual clemency. While he was talking, he perceived a person standing at a window in the room, shaking his head, and rolling himself about in a strange, ridiculous manner. He concluded that he was an idiot, whom his relations had put under the care of Mr. Richardson, as a very good man. To his

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<sup>1</sup> Impartial posterity may, perhaps, be as little inclined as Dr. Johnson was, to justify the uncommon rigour exercised in the case of Dr. Archibald Cameron. He was an amiable and truly honest man; and his offence was owing to a generous though mistaken principle of duty. Being obliged, after 1746, to give up his profession as a physician, and to go into foreign parts, he was honoured with the rank of colonel, both in the French and Spanish service. He was a son of the ancient and respectable family of Cameron of Lochiel; and his brother, who was the chief of that brave clan, distinguished himself by moderation and humanity while the Highland army marched victorious through Scotland. It is remarkable of this chief, that though he had earnestly remonstrated against the attempt as hopeless, he was of too heroic a spirit not to venture his life and fortune in the cause when personally asked by him whom he thought his Prince.



*William Hogarth*





great surprise, however, this figure stalked forwards to where he and Mr. Richardson were sitting, and all at once took up the argument, and burst out into an invective against George the Second, as one who, upon all occasions, was unrelenting and barbarous, mentioning many instances, particularly, that when an officer of high rank had been acquitted by a court-martial, George the Second had, with his own hand, struck his name off the list. In short, he displayed such a power of eloquence, that Hogarth looked at him with astonishment, and actually imagined that this idiot had been at the moment inspired. Neither Hogarth nor Johnson were made known to each other at this interview.

In 1740 he wrote for the *Gentleman's Magazine* the 'Preface,' 'The Life of Admiral Blake,' and the first part of those of 'Sir Francis Drake,' and 'Philip Barretier,' both which he finished the following year. He also wrote an 'Essay on Epitaphs,' and an 'Epitaph on Phillips, a Musician,' which was afterwards published, with some other pieces of his, in Mrs. Williams's *Miscellanies*. This Epitaph is so exquisitely beautiful, that I remember even Lord Kames, strangely prejudiced as he was against Dr. Johnson, was compelled to allow it very high praise. It has been ascribed to Mr. Garrick, from its appearing at first with the signature G; but I have heard Mr. Garrick declare that it was written by Dr. Johnson, and give the following account of the manner in which it was composed. Johnson and he were sitting together, when, amongst other things, Garrick repeated an Epitaph upon this Phillips by a Dr. Wilkes, in these words:—

‘Exalted soul! whose harmony could please  
 The love-sick virgin, and the gouty ease;  
 Could jarring discord, like Amphion, move  
 To beauteous order and harmonious love;  
 Rest here in peace, till angels bid thee rise,  
 And meet thy blessed Saviour in the skies.’

Johnson shook his head at these commonplace funereal lines, and said to Garrick, ‘I think, Davy, I can make a better.’ Then stirring about his tea for a little while, in a state of meditation, he almost extempore produced the following verses:

‘Phillips, whose touch harmonious could remove  
 The pangs of guilty power or hapless love;  
 Rest here, distress’d by poverty no more,  
 Here find that calm thou gav’st so oft before;  
 Sleep, undisturb’d, within this peaceful shrine,  
 Till angels wake thee with a note like thine!’<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [The Epitaph of Phillips is in the porch of Wolverhampton Church. The prose part of it is curious:

‘Near this place lies  
 CHARLES CLAUDIUS PHILLIPS,  
 Whose absolute contempt of riches  
 And inimitable performances upon the violin,  
 made him the admiration of all that knew him.  
 He was born in Wales,  
 made the tour of Europe,  
 and, after the experience of both kinds of fortune,  
 Died in 1732.

Mr. Garrick appears not to have recited the verses correctly, the original being as follows. One of the various readings is remarkable, as it is the germ of Johnson’s concluding line:

‘Exalted soul, *thy various sounds* could please  
 The love-sick virgin, and the gouty ease;  
 Could jarring *crowds*, like *old* Amphion, move  
 To beauteous order and harmonious love;  
 Rest here in peace, till angels bid thee rise,  
 And meet thy Saviour’s *consort* in the skies.’

Dr. Wilkes, the author of these lines, was a Fellow of Trinity College, in Oxford, and rector of Pitchford, in Shropshire: he collected materials for a history of that county, and is spoken of by Brown Willis in his *History of Mitred Abbies*, vol. ii. p. 189. But he



*Edward Cave*



At the same time that Mr. Garrick favoured me with this anecdote, he repeated a very pointed epigram by Johnson, on George the Second and Colley Cibber, which has never yet appeared, and of which I know not the exact date. Dr. Johnson afterwards gave it to me himself:

‘Augustus still survives in Maro’s strain,  
And Spenser’s verse prolongs Eliza’s reign;  
Great George’s acts let tuneful Cibber sing;  
For Nature formed the Poet for the King.’

In 1741 he wrote for the *Gentleman’s Magazine* the ‘Preface,’ ‘Conclusion of his Lives of Drake and Barretier,’ ‘A free Translation of the Jests of Hierocles, with an Introduction’; and, I think, the following pieces: ‘Debate on the Proposal of Parliament to Cromwell, to assume the Title of King, abridged, modified, and digested’;<sup>1</sup> ‘Translation of Abbé Guyon’s *Dissertation on the Amazons*’; ‘Translation of Fontenelle’s *Panegyric on Dr. Morin*.’ Two notes upon this appear to me undoubtedly his. He this year, and the two following, wrote the Parliamentary Debates. He told me himself, that he was the sole composer of them for those three years only. He was not, however, precisely exact in his statement, which he mentioned from hasty recollection; for it is sufficiently evident that his composition of them began November 19, 1740, and ended February 23, 1742-3.

It appears from some of Cave’s letters to Dr. Birch,

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was a native of Staffordshire; and to the antiquities of that county was his attention chiefly confined. Mr. Shaw has had the use of his papers.—J. BLAKEWAY.]

<sup>1</sup> [It is very curious if this famous debate was really the composition of Johnson. Dr. Hill sees his hand in it.—A. B.]

that Cave had better assistance for that branch of his Magazine than has been generally supposed ; and that he was indefatigable in getting it made as perfect as he could.

Thus, 21st July 1735 : ‘ I trouble you with the enclosed, because you said you could easily correct what is here given for Lord C——ld’s speech. I beg you will do so as soon as you can for me, because the month is far advanced.’

And 15th July 1737 : ‘ As you remember the debates so far as to perceive the speeches already printed are not exact, I beg the favour that you will peruse the enclosed, and, in the best manner your memory will serve, correct the mistaken passages, or add anything that is omitted. I should be very glad to have something of the Duke of N——le’s speech, which would be particularly of service.

‘ A gentleman has Lord Bathurst’s speech to add something to.’

And July 3, 1744 : ‘ You will see what stupid, low, abominable stuff is put<sup>1</sup> upon your noble and learned friend’s<sup>2</sup> character, such as I should quite reject, and endeavour to do something better towards doing justice to the character. But as I cannot expect to attain my desire in that respect, it would be a great satisfaction, as well as an honour to our work, to have the favour of the genuine speech. It is a method that several have been pleased to take, as I could show, but I think myself under a restraint. I shall say so far, that I have had some by a third hand, which I understood well enough to come from the first ; others

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<sup>1</sup> I suppose in another compilation in the same kind.

<sup>2</sup> Doubtless Lord Hardwicke.

by penny post, and others by the speakers themselves, who have been pleased to visit St. John's Gate, and show particular marks of their being pleased.' <sup>1</sup>

There is no reason, I believe, to doubt the veracity of Cave. It is, however, remarkable, that none of these letters are in the years during which Johnson alone furnished the Debates, and one of them is in the very year after he ceased from that labour. Johnson told me, that as soon as he found that the speeches were thought genuine, he determined that he would write no more of them; 'for he would not be accessory to the propagation of falsehood.' And such was the tenderness of his conscience, that a short time before his death, he expressed his regret for his having been the author of fictions, which had passed for realities.

He nevertheless agreed with me in thinking that the debates which he had framed were to be valued as orations upon questions of public importance. They have accordingly been collected in volumes, properly arranged, and recommended to the notice of parliamentary speakers by a preface, written by no inferior hand. <sup>2</sup> I must, however, observe, that although there is in these debates a wonderful store of political information, and very powerful eloquence, I cannot agree that they exhibit the manner of each particular speaker, as Sir John Hawkins seems to think. But, indeed, what opinion can we have of his judgment and taste in public speaking, who presumes to give, as the characteristics of two celebrated orators, 'the deep-

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<sup>1</sup> *Birch's MSS.* in the British Museum, 4302.

<sup>2</sup> I am assured that the editor is Mr. George Chalmers, whose commercial works are well known and esteemed.

mouthed rancour of Pulteney, and the yelping pertinacity of Pitt.' <sup>1</sup>

This year I find that his tragedy of *Irene* had been for some time ready for the stage, and that his necessities made him desirous of getting as much as he could for it, without delay; for there is the following letter from Mr. Cave to Dr. Birch, in the same volume of manuscripts in the British Museum, from which I copied those above quoted. They were most obligingly pointed out to me by Sir William Musgrave, one of the curators of that noble repository:

‘Sept. 9, 1741.

‘I have put Mr. Johnson’s play into Mr. Gray’s <sup>2</sup> hands, in order to sell it to him, if he is inclined to buy it; but I doubt whether he will or not. He would dispose of the copy, and whatever advantage may be made by acting it. Would your society, <sup>3</sup> or any gentleman, or body of men that you know, take such a bargain? He and I are very unfit to deal with theatrical persons. Fleetwood was to have acted it last season, but Johnson’s diffidence or <sup>4</sup> prevented it.’

I have already mentioned that *Irene* was not brought into public notice till Garrick was manager of Drury Lane theatre.

In 1742 <sup>5</sup> he wrote for the *Gentleman’s Magazine*

<sup>1</sup> Hawkins’s *Life of Johnson*, p. 100.

<sup>2</sup> A bookseller of London.

<sup>3</sup> Not the Royal Society, but the Society for the encouragement of learning, of which Dr. Birch was a leading member. Their object was to assist authors in printing expensive works. It existed from about 1735 to 1746, when, having incurred a considerable debt, it was dissolved.

<sup>4</sup> There is no erasure here, but a mere blank, to fill up which may be an exercise for ingenious conjecture.

<sup>5</sup> [From one of his letters to a friend, written in June 1742, it should seem that he then proposed to write a play on the subject of Charles the Twelfth of Sweden, and to have it ready for the ensuing winter. The passage alluded to, however, is somewhat ambiguous; and the work which he then had in contemplation may have been a history of that monarch.—M.]



the 'Preface,' the 'Parliamentary Debates,' 'Essay on the Account of the Conduct of the Duchess of Marlborough,' then the popular topic of conversation. This essay is a short but masterly performance. We find him in No. 13 of his *Rambler*, censuring a profligate sentiment in that 'Account,' and again insisting upon it strenuously in conversation.<sup>1</sup> 'An Account of the Life of Peter Burman,' I believe chiefly taken from a foreign publication, as indeed he could not himself know much about Burman; 'Additions to his Life of Barretier'; 'The Life of Sydenham,' afterwards prefixed to Dr. Swan's edition of his works; 'Proposals for printing *Bibliotheca Harleiana*, or a Catalogue of the Library of the Earl of Oxford.' His account of that celebrated collection of books, in which he displays the importance to literature, of what the French call a *catalogue raisonné*, when the subjects of it are extensive and various, and it is executed with ability, cannot fail to impress all his readers with admiration of his philological attainments. It was afterwards prefixed to the first volume of the Catalogue, in which the Latin accounts of books were written by him. He was employed in this business by Mr. Thomas Osborne the bookseller, who purchased the library for £13,000, a sum which, Mr. Oldys says in one of his manuscripts, was not more than the binding of the books had cost; yet, as Dr. Johnson assured me, the slowness of the sale was such that there was not much gained by it. It has been confidently related, with many embellishments, that Johnson one day knocked Osborne down in his shop with a folio, and put his foot upon his neck. The simple truth I had from Johnson himself.

<sup>1</sup> *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides.*

‘Sir, he was impertinent to me, and I beat him. But it was not in his shop: it was in my own chamber.’

A very diligent observer may trace him where we should not easily suppose him to be found. I have no doubt that he wrote the little abridgment entitled ‘Foreign History’ in the Magazine for December. To prove it, I shall quote the Introduction: ‘As this is that season of the year in which Nature may be said to command a suspension of hostilities, and which seems intended, by putting a short stop to violence and slaughter, to afford time for malice to relent, and animosity to subside, we can scarce expect any other account than of plans, negotiations, and treaties, of proposals for peace and preparations for war.’ As also this passage:—‘Let those who despise the capacity of the Swiss tell us by what wonderful policy or by what happy conciliation of interests it is brought to pass that in a body made up of different communities and different religions there should be no civil commotions, though the people are so warlike that to nominate and raise an army is the same.’

I am obliged to Mr. Astle for his ready permission to copy the two following letters, of which the originals are in his possession. Their contents show that they were written about this time, and that Johnson was now engaged in preparing an historical account of the British Parliament:

TO MR. CAVE

[No date.]

‘SIR,—I believe I am going to write a long letter, and have therefore taken a whole sheet of paper. The first thing to be written about is our historical design.

‘You mentioned the proposal of printing in numbers, as an alteration in the scheme, but I believe you mistook, some way

or other, my meaning; I had no other view than that you might rather print too many of five sheets than of five-and-thirty.

‘With regard to what I shall say on the manner of proceeding, I would have it understood as wholly indifferent to me, and my opinion only, not my resolution. *Emptoris sit eligere.*

‘I think the insertion of the exact dates of the most important events in the margin, or of so many events as may enable the reader to regulate the order of facts with sufficient exactness, the proper medium between a journal which has regard only to time and a history which ranges facts according to their dependence on each other, and postpones or anticipates according to the convenience of narration. I think the work ought to partake of the spirit of history, which is contrary to minute exactness, and of the regularity of a journal, which is inconsistent with spirit. For this reason, I neither admit numbers or dates, nor reject them.

‘I am of your opinion with regard to placing most of the resolutions, etc., in the margin, and think we shall give the most complete account of parliamentary proceedings that can be contrived. The naked papers, without an historical treatise interwoven, require some other book to make them understood. I will date the succeeding facts with some exactness, but I think in the margin. You told me on Saturday that I had received money on this work, and found set down £13, 2s. 6d., reckoning the half-guinea of last Saturday. As you hinted to me that you had many calls for money, I would not press you too hard, and therefore shall desire only, as I send it in, two guineas for a sheet of copy; the rest you may pay me when it may be more convenient; and even by this sheet-payment I shall, for some time, be very expensive.

‘The *Life of Savage* I am ready to go upon; and in great primer, and pica notes, I reckon on sending in half a sheet a day; but the money for that shall likewise lie by in your hands till it is done. With the debates, shall not I have business enough? If I had but good pens!

‘Towards Mr. Savage’s *Life*, what more have you got? I would willingly have his trial, etc., and know whether his defence be at Bristol, and would have his collection of poems,

on account of the Preface ;—*The Plain Dealer*,<sup>1</sup>—all the magazines that have anything of his or relating to him.

‘I thought my letter would be long, but it is now ended ; and I am, sir, yours, etc., SAM. JOHNSON.’

‘The boy found me writing this almost in the dark, when I could not quite easily read yours.

‘I have read the Italian :—nothing in it is well.

‘I had no notion of having anything for the inscription.<sup>2</sup> I hope you don’t think I kept it to extort a price. I could think of nothing till to-day. If you could spare me another guinea for the history, I should take it very kindly, to-night ; but if you do not, I shall not think it an injury.—I am almost well again.’

#### TO MR. CAVE

‘SIR,—You did not tell me your determination about the *Soldier’s Letter*,<sup>3</sup> which I am confident was never printed. I think it will not do by itself, or in any other place, so well as the Mag. Extraordinary. If you will have it all, I believe you do not think I set it high, and I will be glad if what you give you will give quickly.

‘You need not be in care about something to print, for I have got the State Trials, and shall extract Layer, Atterbury, and Macclesfield from them, and shall bring them to you in a fortnight, after which I will try to get the South Sea Report.’

[No date, nor signature.]

I would also ascribe to him an ‘Essay on the Description of China, from the French of Du Halde.’

His writings in the *Gentleman’s Magazine* in 1743 are the ‘Preface,’ the ‘Parliamentary Debates,’ ‘Considerations on the Dispute between Crousaz and Warburton on Pope’s *Essay on Man*,’ in which, while he defends Crousaz, he shows an admirable metaphysical acuteness and temperance in controversy ; ‘Ad Lauram

<sup>1</sup> *The Plain Dealer* was published in 1724, and contained some account of Savage.

<sup>2</sup> [Perhaps the Runic inscription. *Gent. Mag.* vol. xii. p. 132.—M.]

<sup>3</sup> I have not discovered what this was.

parituram Epigramma';<sup>1</sup> and 'A Latin Translation of Pope's *Verses on his Grotto*'; and, as he could employ

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<sup>1</sup> *Anglicas inter pulcherrima Laura puellas,  
Mox uteri pondus depositura grave,  
Adsit, Laura, tibi facilis Lucina dolenti,  
Neve tibi noceat prænituisse Deæ.*

Mr. Hector was present when this Epigram was made *impromptu*. The first line was proposed by Dr. James, and Johnson was called upon by the company to finish it, which he instantly did.

[The following elegant Latin Ode, which appeared in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for 1743 (vol. xiii. p. 548), was many years ago pointed out to James Bindley, Esq., as written by Johnson, and may safely be attributed to him :

AD ORNATISSIMAM PUELLAM.  
VANÆ sit arti, sit studio modus,  
Formosa virgo ! sit speculo quies,  
Curamque quærendi decoris  
Mitte, supervacuosque cultus.  
Ut fortuitis verna coloribus  
Depicta vulgo rura magis placent,  
Nec invident horto nitenti  
Divitias operosiores :  
Lenique fons cum murmure pulcrior  
Obliquat ultro præcipitem fugam  
Inter reluctantes lapillos, et  
Ducit aquas temere sequentes :  
Utque inter undas, inter et arbores,  
Jam vere primo dulce strepunt aves,  
Et arte nulla gratiores  
Ingeminant sine lege cantus :  
Nativa sic te gratia, te nitor  
Simplex decebit, te Veneres tuæ ;  
Nudus Cupido suspicatur  
Artifices nimis apparatus.  
Ergo fluentem tu, male sedula,  
Ne sæva inuras semper acu comam ;  
Nec sparsa odorato nitentes  
Pulvere dedecores capillos ;  
Quales nec olim vel Ptolemæia  
Jactabat uxor, sidereo in choro  
Utcunque devotæ refulgent  
Verticis exuviæ decori ;  
Nec diva mater, cum similem tuæ  
Mentita formam, et pulcrior adspici,  
Permisit incomtas protervis  
Fusa comas agitare ventis

In vol. xiv. p. 46, of the same work, an elegant Epigram was inserted,

his pen with equal success upon a small matter as a great, I suppose him to be the author of an advertisement for Osborne, concerning the great Harleian Catalogue.

But I should think myself much wanting, both to my illustrious friend and my readers, did I not introduce here, with more than ordinary respect, an exquisitely beautiful Ode, which has not been inserted in any of the collections of Johnson's poetry, written by him at a very early period, as Mr. Hector informs me, and inserted in the *Gentleman's Magazine* of this year :

*Friendship: an Ode.*

FRIENDSHIP, peculiar boon of heaven,  
The noble mind's delight and pride,  
To men and angels only given,  
To all the lower world denied.

While love unknown among the blest,  
Parent of thousand wild desires,  
The savage and the human breast  
Torments alike with raging fires ;

With bright, but oft destructive, gleam,  
Alike o'er all his lightnings fly ;  
Thy lambent glories only beam  
Around the fav'rites of the sky.

Thy gentle flows of guiltless joys  
On fools and villains ne'er descend :  
In vain for thee the tyrant sighs,  
And hugs a flatterer for a friend.

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in answer to the foregoing Ode, which was written by Dr. Inyon of Norfolk, a physician, and an excellent classical scholar :

AD AUTOREM CARMINIS AD ORNATISSIMAM PUELLAM.

O cui non potuit, quia culta, placere puella,  
Qui speras Musam posse placere tuam !—M.]

Directress of the brave and just,  
 O guide us through life's darksome way !  
 And let the tortures of mistrust  
 On selfish bosoms only prey.  
 Nor shall thine ardour cease to glow,  
 When souls to blissful climes remove :  
 What raised our virtue here below,  
 Shall aid our happiness above.

Johnson had now an opportunity of obliging his schoolfellow, Dr. James, of whom he once observed, 'no man brings more mind to his profession.' James published this year his *Medicinal Dictionary*, in three volumes folio. Johnson, as I understood from him, had written, or assisted in writing, the proposals for this work ; and being very fond of the study of physic, in which James was his master, he furnished some of the articles. He, however, certainly wrote for it the Dedication to Dr. Mead, which is conceived with great address, to conciliate the patronage of that very eminent man.<sup>1</sup>

It has been circulated, I know not with what authenticity, that Johnson considered Dr. Birch as a dull writer, and said of him, 'Tom Birch is as brisk as a bee in conversation ; but no sooner does he take a pen in his hand than it becomes a torpedo to him, and benumbs all his faculties.' That the literature of this

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<sup>1</sup> TO DR. MEAD.

'SIR,—That the *Medicinal Dictionary* is dedicated to you is to be imputed only to your reputation for superior skill in those sciences which I have endeavoured to explain and facilitate ; and you are, therefore, to consider this address, if it be agreeable to you, as one of the rewards of merit ; and if otherwise, as one of the inconveniences of eminence.

'However you shall receive it, my design cannot be disappointed ; because this public appeal to your judgment will show that I do not found my hopes of approbation upon the ignorance of my readers, and that I fear his censure least whose knowledge is most extensive.—I am, sir, your most obedient humble servant,

R. JAMES.'

country is much indebted to Birch's activity and diligence must certainly be acknowledged. We have seen that Johnson honoured him with a Greek Epigram; and his correspondence with him during many years proves that he had no mean opinion of him.

TO DR. BIRCH

*'Thursday, Sept. 29, 1743.*

'SIR,—I hope you will excuse me for troubling you on an occasion on which I know not whom else I can apply to; I am at a loss for the Lives and Characters of Earl Stanhope, the two Craggs, and the minister Sunderland; and beg that you will inform [me] where I may find them, and send any pamphlets, etc., relating to them to Mr. Cave, to be perused for a few days by, sir, your most humble servant,

'SAM. JOHNSON.'

His circumstances were at this time embarrassed; yet his affection for his mother was so warm and so liberal that he took upon himself a debt of hers which, though small in itself, was then considerable to him. This appears from the following letter which he wrote to Mr. Levett of Lichfield, the original of which lies now before me :

TO MR. LEVETT, IN LICHFIELD

*'December 1, 1743.*

'SIR,—I am extremely sorry that we have encroached so much upon your forbearance with respect to the interest, which a great perplexity of affairs hindered me from thinking of with that attention that I ought, and which I am not immediately able to remit to you, but will pay it (I think twelve pounds) in two months. I look upon this, and on the future interest of that mortgage, as my own debt; and beg that you will be pleased to give me directions how to pay it, and not mention it to my dear mother. If it be necessary to pay this in a less time, I believe I can do it; but I take two months for certainty, and beg an answer whether you can allow me so



much time. I think myself very much obliged to your forbearance, and shall esteem it a great happiness to be able to serve you. I have great opportunities of dispersing anything that you may think it proper to make public. I will give a note for the money, payable at the time mentioned, to any one here that you shall appoint.—I am, sir, your most obedient and most humble servant,

SAM. JOHNSON.

‘At Mr. Osborne’s, bookseller, in Gray’s Inn.’

It does not appear that he wrote anything in 1744 for the *Gentleman’s Magazine*, but the ‘Preface.’ His *Life of Barretier* was now republished in a pamphlet by itself. But he produced one work this year, fully sufficient to maintain the high reputation which he had acquired. This was the *Life of Richard Savage*; a man of whom it is difficult to speak impartially, without wondering that he was for some time the intimate companion of Johnson; for his character<sup>1</sup> was marked by profligacy, insolence, and ingratitude; yet, as he undoubtedly had a warm and vigorous, though unregulated mind, had seen life in all its varieties, and been much in the company of the statesmen and wits of his time, he could communicate to Johnson an abundant supply of such materials as his philosophical curiosity most eagerly desired; and, as Savage’s misfortunes and misconduct had reduced him to the lowest state of wretchedness as a writer for his

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<sup>1</sup> As a specimen of his temper, I insert the following letter from him to a noble Lord, to whom he was under great obligations, but who, on account of his bad conduct, was obliged to discard him. The original was in the hands of the late Francis Cockayne Cust, Esq., one of his Majesty’s Counsel learned in the law:—

‘RIGHT HONOURABLE BRUTE AND BOOBY,—I find you want (as Mr. — is pleased to hint) to swear away my life, that is, the life of your creditor, because he asks you for a debt. The public shall soon be acquainted with this, to judge whether you are not fitter to be an Irish Evidence, than to be an Irish Peer. I defy and despise you.—I am, your determined adversary,

R. S.’

bread, his visit to St. John's Gate naturally brought Johnson and him together.<sup>1</sup>

It is melancholy to reflect that Johnson and Savage were sometimes in such extreme indigence<sup>2</sup> that they could not pay for a lodging; so that they have wandered together whole nights in the streets.<sup>3</sup> Yet in these almost incredible scenes of distress, we may suppose that Savage mentioned many of the anecdotes with which Johnson afterwards enriched the life of this unhappy companion, and those of other poets.

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<sup>1</sup> Sir John Hawkins gives the world to understand that Johnson, 'being an admirer of genteel manners, was captivated by the address and demeanour of Savage, who, as to his exterior, was to a remarkable degree accomplished.'—Hawkins's *Life*, p. 52. But Sir John's notions of gentility must appear somewhat ludicrous, from his stating the following circumstance as presumptive evidence that Savage was a good swordsman: 'That he understood the exercise of a gentleman's weapon may be inferred from the use made of it in that rash encounter which is related in his life.' The dexterity here alluded to was, that Savage, in a nocturnal fit of drunkenness, stabbed a man at a coffee-house and killed him: for which he was tried at the Old Bailey, and found guilty of murder.

Johnson, indeed, describes him as having 'a grave and manly deportment, a solemn dignity of mien; but which, upon a nearer acquaintance, softened into an engaging easiness of manners.' How highly Johnson admired him for that knowledge which he himself so much cultivated, and what kindness he entertained for him, appears from the following lines in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for April 1738, which I am assured were written by Johnson:

Ad RICARDUM SAVAGE.

*Humani studium generis cui pectore fervet,  
O colat humanum te foveatque genus.*

<sup>2</sup> [The following striking proof of Johnson's extreme indigence when he published the *Life of Savage*, was communicated to Mr. Boswell by Mr. Richard Stowe, of Apsley, in Bedfordshire, from the information of Mr. Walter Harte, author of the *Life of Gustavus Adolphus*:

'Soon after *Savage's Life* was published, Mr. Harte dined with Edward Cave, and occasionally praised it. Soon after, meeting him, Cave said, 'You made a man very happy to other day.'—'How could that be?' says Harte; 'nobody was there but ourselves.' Cave answered by reminding him that a plate of victuals was sent behind a screen, which was to Johnson, dressed so shabbily, that he did not choose to appear; but on hearing the conversation, he was highly delighted with the encomiums on his book.'—M.]

<sup>3</sup> [As Johnson was married before he settled in London, and must have always had a habitation for his wife, some readers have wondered how

He told Sir Joshua Reynolds that one night in particular, when Savage and he walked round St. James's Square for want of a lodging, they were not at all depressed by their situation; but in high spirits and brimful of patriotism, traversed the square for several hours, inveighed against the minister, and 'resolved they would *stand by their country*.'

I am afraid, however, that by associating with Savage, who was habituated to the dissipation and licentiousness of the town, Johnson, though his good principles remained steady, did not entirely preserve that conduct for which, in days of greater simplicity, he was remarked by his friend Mr. Hector; but was imperceptibly led into some indulgences which occasioned much distress to his virtuous mind.

That Johnson was anxious that an authentic and favourable account of his extraordinary friend should first get possession of the public attention, is evident from a letter which he wrote in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for August of the year preceding its publication:

'MR. URBAN,—As your collections show how often you have owed the ornaments of your poetical pages to the correspondence of the unfortunate and ingenious Mr. Savage, I doubt not but you have so much regard to his memory as to encourage

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he ever could have been driven to stroll about with Savage all night, for want of a lodging. But it should be remembered that Johnson, at different periods, had lodgings in the vicinity of London; and his finances certainly would not admit of a double establishment. When, therefore, he spent a convivial day in London, and found it too late to return to any country residence he may occasionally have had, having no lodging in town, he was obliged to pass the night in the manner described above; for, though at that period it was not uncommon for two men to sleep together, Savage, it appears, could accommodate him with nothing but his company in the open air. The Epigram given above, which doubtless was written by Johnson, shows that their acquaintance commenced before April 1738.—M.]

any design that may have a tendency to the preservation of it from insults or calumnies; and therefore, with some degree of assurance, entreat you to inform the public, that his life will speedily be published by a person who was favoured with his confidence, and received from himself an account of most of the transactions which he proposes to mention, to the time of his retirement to Swansea in Wales.

‘From that period to his death in the prison of Bristol, the account will be continued from materials still less liable to objection; his own letters, and those of his friends, some of which will be inserted in the work, and abstracts of others subjoined in the margin.

‘It may be reasonably imagined that others may have the same design; but as it is not credible that they can obtain the same materials, it must be expected they will supply from invention the want of intelligence; and that under the title of the *Life of Savage*, they will publish only a novel, filled with romantic adventures and imaginary amours. You may therefore, perhaps, gratify the lovers of truth and wit by giving me leave to inform them in your Magazine that my account will be published in 8vo by Mr. Roberts, in Warwick Lane.’

[No signature.]

In February 1744, it accordingly came forth from the shop of Roberts, between whom and Johnson I have not traced any connection, except the casual one of this publication. In Johnson’s *Life of Savage*, although it must be allowed that its moral is the reverse of ‘*Respicere exemplar vitæ morumque jubebo*,’ a very useful lesson is inculcated, to guard men of warm passions from a too free indulgence of them; and the various incidents are related in so clear and animated a manner, and illuminated throughout with so much philosophy, that it is one of the most interesting narratives in the English language. Sir Joshua Reynolds told me, that upon his return from Italy he met with it in Devonshire, knowing nothing of its author,

and began to read it while he was standing with his arm leaning against a chimney-piece. It seized his attention so strongly, that not being able to lay down the book till he had finished it, when he attempted to move, he found his arm totally benumbed. The rapidity with which this work was composed is a wonderful circumstance. Johnson has been heard to say, 'I wrote forty-eight of the printed octavo pages of the *Life of Savage* at a sitting; but then I sat up all night.'<sup>1</sup>

He exhibits the genius of Savage to the best advantage in the specimens of his poetry which he has selected, some of which are of uncommon merit. We, indeed, occasionally find such vigour and such point as might make us suppose that the generous aid of Johnson had been imparted to his friend. Mr. Thomas Warton made this remark to me, and, in support of it, quoted from the poem entitled *The Bastard* a line in which the fancied superiority of one 'stamped in Nature's mint with ecstasy,' is contrasted with a regular lawful descendant of some great and ancient family :

'No tenth transmitter of a foolish face.'

But the fact is that this poem was published some years before Johnson and Savage were acquainted.

It is remarkable that in this biographical disquisition there appears a very strong symptom of Johnson's prejudice against players—a prejudice which may be attributed to the following causes: first, the imperfection of his organs, which were so defective that he was not susceptible of the fine impressions

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<sup>1</sup> *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides.*

which theatrical excellence produces upon the generality of mankind; secondly, the cold rejection of his tragedy; and, lastly, the brilliant success of Garrick, who had been his pupil, who had come to London at the same time with him, not in a much more prosperous state than himself, and whose talents he undoubtedly rated low compared with his own. His being outstripped by his pupil in the race of immediate fame as well as of fortune probably made him feel some indignation, as thinking that whatever might be Garrick's merits in his art, the reward was too great when compared with what the most successful efforts of literary labour could attain. At all periods of his life Johnson used to talk contemptuously of players, but in this work he speaks of them with peculiar acrimony, for which, perhaps, there was formerly too much reason from the licentious and dissolute manners of those engaged in that profession. It is but justice to add that in our own time such a change has taken place that there is no longer room for such an unfavourable distinction.

His schoolfellow and friend, Dr. Taylor, told me a pleasant anecdote of Johnson's triumphing over his pupil, David Garrick. When that great actor had played some little time at Goodman's Fields, Johnson and Taylor went to see him perform, and afterwards passed the evening at a tavern with him and old Giffard. Johnson, who was ever depreciating stage-players, after censuring some mistakes in emphasis which Garrick had committed in the course of that night's acting, said, 'The players, sir, have got a kind of rant, with which they run on, without any regard either to accent or emphasis.' Both Garrick

and Giffard were offended at this sarcasm, and endeavoured to refute it, upon which Johnson rejoined, 'Well, now, I'll give you something to speak with which you are little acquainted, and then we shall see how just my observation is. That shall be the criterion. Let me hear you repeat the ninth commandment, "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour."' Both tried at it, said Dr. Taylor, and both mistook the emphasis, which should be upon *not* and *false witness*.<sup>1</sup> Johnson put them right, and enjoyed his victory with great glee.

His *Life of Savage* was no sooner published than the following liberal praise was given to it in *The Champion*, a periodical paper: 'This pamphlet is, without flattery to its author, as just and well written a piece as of its kind I ever saw, so that at the same time that it highly deserves, it certainly stands very little in need of, this recommendation. As to the history of the unfortunate person whose memoirs compose this work, it is certainly penned with equal accuracy and spirit, of which I am so much the better judge as I know many of the facts mentioned to be strictly true and very fairly related. Besides, it is not only the story of Mr. Savage, but innumerable incidents relating to other persons and other affairs, which renders this a very amusing and, withal, a very instructive and valuable performance. The author's observations are short, significant, and just, as his narrative is remarkably smooth and well-disposed.

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<sup>1</sup> I suspect Dr. Taylor was inaccurate in this statement. The emphasis should be equally upon *shalt* and *not*, as both concur to form the negative injunction; and *false witness*, like the other acts prohibited in the Decalogue, should not be marked by any peculiar emphasis, but only be distinctly enunciated.

[A moderate emphasis should be placed on *false*.—KEARNEY.]

His reflections open to all the recesses of the human heart ; and, in a word, a more just or pleasant, a more engaging or a more improving treatise on all the excellencies and defects of human nature is scarce to be found in our own or, perhaps, any other language.’<sup>1</sup>

Johnson’s partiality for Savage made him entertain no doubt of his story, however extraordinary and improbable. It never occurred to him to question his being the son of the Countess of Macclesfield, of whose unrelenting barbarity he so loudly complained, and the particulars of which are related in so strong and affecting a manner in Johnson’s *Life of him*. Johnson was certainly well warranted in publishing his narrative, however offensive it might be to the lady and her relations, because her alleged unnatural and cruel conduct to her son and shameful avowal of guilt were stated in a *Life of Savage* now lying before me, which came out so early as 1727, and no attempt had been made to confute it or to punish the author or printer as a libeller, but, for the honour of human nature, we should be glad to find the shocking tale not true ; and from a respectable gentleman<sup>2</sup> connected with the lady’s family I have received such information and remarks as joined to my own inquiries will, I think, render it at least somewhat doubtful, especially when we consider that it must have originated from the person himself who went by the name of Richard Savage.

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<sup>1</sup> This character of the *Life of Savage* was not written by Fielding, as has been supposed, but most probably by Ralph, who, as appears from the minutes of the partners of *The Champion*, in the possession of Mr. Reed of Staple Inn, succeeded Fielding in his share of the paper before the date of that eulogium.

<sup>2</sup> The late Francis Cocayne Cust, Esq., one of his Majesty’s Counsel.



If the maxim, *falsum in uno, falsum in omnibus*, were to be received without qualification, the credit of Savage's narrative, as conveyed to us, would be annihilated, for it contains some assertions which, beyond a question, are not true.

1. In order to induce a belief that the Earl Rivers, on account of a criminal connection with whom Lady Macclesfield is said to have been divorced from her husband by Act of Parliament,<sup>1</sup> had a peculiar anxiety about the child which she bore to him, it is alleged that his Lordship gave him his own name, and had it duly recorded in the register of St. Andrew's, Holborn. I have carefully inspected that register, but no such entry is to be found.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 1697.

<sup>2</sup> [Mr. Cust's reasoning, with respect to the filiation of Richard Savage, always appeared to me extremely unsatisfactory: and is entirely overturned by the following decisive observations, for which the reader is indebted to the unwearied researches of Mr. Bindley.—The story on which Mr. Cust so much relies, that Savage was a supposititious child, not the son of Lord Rivers and Lady Macclesfield, but the offspring of a shoemaker, introduced in consequence of her real son's death, was, without doubt, grounded on the circumstance of Lady Macclesfield having, in 1696, previously to the birth of Savage, had a daughter by the Earl Rivers, who died in her infancy: a fact which, as the same gentleman observes to me, was proved in the course of the proceedings on Lord Macclesfield's Bill of Divorce. Most fictions of this kind have some admixture of truth in them.—M.]

[From 'the Earl of Macclesfield's Case,' which, in 1797-8, was presented to the Lords, in order to procure an act of divorce, it appears that 'Anne, Countess of Macclesfield, under the name of Madam Smith, in Fox Court, near Brook Street, Holborn, was delivered of a male child by Mrs. Wright, a midwife, on Saturday the 16th of January 1696-7, at six o'clock in the morning, who was baptized on the Monday following, and registered by the name of Richard, the son of John Smith, by Mr. Burbridge, assistant to Dr. Manningham's curate for St. Andrew's, Holborn: that the child was christened on Monday the 18th of January in Fox Court; and, from the privacy, was supposed by Mr. Burbridge to be 'a by-blow or bastard.' It also appears that during her delivery the lady wore a mask; and that Mary Pegler on the next day after the baptism (Tuesday) took a male child, whose mother was called Madam Smith, from the house of Mrs. Pheasant, in Fox Court (running from Brook Street into Gray's Inn Lane), who went by the name of Mrs. Lee.

Conformable to this statement is the entry in the Register of St.

2. It is stated, that 'Lady Macclesfield having lived for some time upon very uneasy terms with her husband, thought a public confession of adultery the most obvious and expeditious method of obtaining her liberty'; and Johnson, assuming this to be true, stigmatises her with indignation as 'the wretch who had, without scruple, proclaimed herself an adulteress.' But I have perused the Journals of both Houses of Parliament at the period of her divorce, and there find it authentically ascertained, that so far from voluntarily submitting to the ignominious charge of adultery, she made a strenuous defence by her Counsel; the bill having been first moved 15th of January 1697-8, in the House of Lords, and proceeded on (with various applications for time to bring up witnesses at a distance, etc.), at intervals, till the 3rd of March, when it passed. It was brought to the Commons, by a message from the Lords, the 5th of March, proceeded on the 7th, 10th, 11th, 14th, and 15th, on which day, after a full examination of witnesses on both sides, and hearing of Counsel, it was reported without amendments, passed, and carried to the Lords. That Lady Macclesfield was convicted of the crime of which she was accused cannot be denied; but the question now is whether the person calling himself Richard Savage was her son.

It has been said that when Earl Rivers was dying, and anxious to provide for all his natural children, he was informed by Lady Macclesfield that her son by

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Andrew's, Holborn, which is as follows, and which unquestionably records the baptism of Richard Savage, to whom Lord Rivers gave his own Christian name, prefixed to the assumed surname of his mother:—  
'Jany. 1696-7. RICHARD, son of John Smith and Mary, in Fox Court, in Gray's Inn Lane, baptized the 18th.'—J. ELAKWAY.]

him was dead. Whether, then, shall we believe that this was a malignant lie, invented by a mother to prevent her own child from receiving the bounty of his father, which was accordingly the consequence, if the person whose life Johnson wrote was her son ; or shall we not rather believe that the person who then assumed the name of Richard Savage was an impostor, being in reality the son of the shoemaker, under whose wife's care Lady Macclesfield's child was placed ; that after the death of the real Richard Savage he attempted to personate him ; and that, the fraud being known to Lady Macclesfield, he was therefore repulsed by her with just resentment ?

There is a strong circumstance in support of the last supposition, though it has been mentioned as an aggravation of Lady Macclesfield's unnatural conduct, and that is, her having prevented him from obtaining the benefit of a legacy left to him by Mrs. Lloyd, his godmother. For if there were such a legacy left, his not being able to obtain payment of it must be imputed to his consciousness that he was not the real person. The just inference should be that by the death of Lady Macclesfield's child before its godmother the legacy became lapsed, and therefore that Johnson's Richard Savage was an impostor.

If he had a title to the legacy he could not have found any difficulty in recovering it ; for had the executors resisted his claim, the whole costs, as well as the legacy, must have been paid by them, if he had been the child to whom it was given.

The talents of Savage, and the mingled fire, rudeness, pride, meanness, and ferocity of his charac-

ter,<sup>1</sup> concur in making it credible that he was fit to plan and carry on an ambitious and daring scheme of imposture, similar instances of which have not been wanting in higher spheres, in the history of different countries, and have had a considerable degree of success.

Yet, on the other hand, to the companion of Johnson (who, through whatever medium he was conveyed into this world,—be it ever so doubtful ‘To whom related, or by whom begot,’ was, unquestionably, a man of no common endowments), we must allow the weight of general repute as to his *status* or parentage, though illicit; and supposing him to be an impostor, it seems strange that Lord Tyrconnel, the nephew of Lady Macclesfield, should patronise him, and even admit him as a guest in his family.<sup>2</sup> Lastly, it must

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<sup>1</sup> Johnson's companion appears to have persuaded that lofty-minded man that he resembled him in having a noble pride; for Johnson, after painting in strong colours the quarrel between Lord Tyrconnel and Savage, asserts that ‘the spirit of Mr. Savage, indeed, never suffered him to solicit a reconciliation: he returned reproach for reproach, and insult for insult.’ But the respectable gentleman to whom I have alluded has in his possession a letter from Savage, after Lord Tyrconnel had discarded him, addressed to the Reverend Mr. Gilbert, his Lordship's chaplain, in which he requests him in the humblest manner to represent his case to the Viscount.

<sup>2</sup> Trusting to Savage's information, Johnson represents this unhappy man's being received as a companion by Lord Tyrconnel, and pensioned by his Lordship, as posterior to Savage's conviction and pardon. But I am assured that Savage had received the voluntary bounty of Lord Tyrconnel, and had been dismissed by him long before the murder was committed, and that his Lordship was very instrumental in procuring Savage's pardon, by his intercession with the Queen through Lady Hertford. If, therefore, he had been desirous of preventing the publication by Savage, he would have left him to his fate. Indeed I must observe, that although Johnson mentions that Lord Tyrconnel's patronage of Savage was ‘upon his promise to lay aside his design of exposing the cruelty of his mother,’ the great biographer has forgotten that he himself has mentioned that Savage's story had been told several years before in *The Plain Dealer*; from which he quotes this strong saying of the generous Sir Richard Steele, that the ‘inhumanity of his mother had given him a right to find every good man his father.’ At the same time it must be acknowledged that the Lady Macclesfield and her relations might still wish that her story should not be brought into more conspicuous notice by the satirical pen of Savage.

ever appear very suspicious that three different accounts of the life of Richard Savage, one published in *The Plain Dealer* in 1724, another in 1727, and another by the powerful pen of Johnson in 1744, and all of them while Lady Macclesfield was alive, should, notwithstanding the severe attacks upon her, have been suffered to pass without any public and effectual contradiction.

I have thus endeavoured to sum up the evidence upon the case as fairly as I can; and the result seems to be that the world must vibrate in a state of uncertainty as to what was the truth.

This digression, I trust, will not be censured, as it relates to a matter exceedingly curious, and very intimately connected with Johnson, both as a man and an author.<sup>1</sup>

He this year wrote the Preface to the *Harleian Miscellany*. The selection of the pamphlets of which it was composed was made by Mr. Oldys, a man of eager curiosity and indefatigable diligence, who first exerted that spirit of inquiry into the literature of the old English writers, by which the works of our great dramatic poet have of late been so signally illustrated.

<sup>1</sup> Miss Mason, after having forfeited the title of Lady Macclesfield by divorce, was married to Colonel Brett, and, it is said, was well known in all the polite circles. Colley Cibber, I am informed, had so high an opinion of her taste and judgment as to genteel life and manners that he submitted every scene of his *Careless Husband* to Mrs. Brett's revision and correction. Colonel Brett was reported to be too free in his gallantry with his lady's maid. Mrs. Brett came into a room one day in her own house, and found the Colonel and her maid both fast asleep in two chairs. She tied a white handkerchief round her husband's neck, which was a sufficient proof that she had discovered his intrigue; but she never at any time took notice of it to him. This incident, as I am told, gave occasion to the well-wrought scene of Sir Charles and Lady Easy and Edging.

[Lady Macclesfield died, aged 80, in 1753. Her eldest daughter by Colonel Brett was the very last mistress of George the First. Ten years after that sovereign's death she married Sir William Leman.—A. B.]

In 1745 he published a pamphlet entitled *Miscellaneous Observations on the Tragedy of Macbeth, with Remarks on Sir T. H.'s* (Sir Thomas Hanmer's) *Edition of Shakespeare*. To which he affixed proposals for a new edition of that poet.

As we do not trace anything else published by him during the course of this year, we may conjecture that he was occupied entirely with that work. But the little encouragement which was given by the public to his anonymous proposals for the execution of a task which Warburton was known to have undertaken probably damped his ardour. His pamphlet, however, was highly esteemed, and was fortunate enough to obtain the approbation even of the supercilious Warburton himself, who, in the Preface to his Shakespeare published two years afterwards, thus mentioned it: 'As to all those things which have been published under the titles of *Essays, Remarks, Observations*, etc., on Shakespeare, if you except some Critical Notes on Macbeth, given as a specimen of a projected edition, and written, as appears, by a man of parts and genius, the rest are absolutely below a serious notice.'

Of this flattering distinction shown to him by Warburton, a very grateful remembrance was ever entertained by Johnson, who said, 'He praised me at a time when praise was of value to me.'

In 1746 it is probable that he was still employed upon his Shakespeare, which perhaps he laid aside for a time upon account of the high expectations which were formed of Warburton's edition of that great poet. It is somewhat curious that his literary career appears to have been almost totally suspended in the years 1745 and 1746, those years which were marked by a

civil war in Great Britain, when a rash attempt was made to restore the House of Stuart to the throne. That he had a tenderness for that unfortunate House is well known ; and some may fancifully imagine that a sympathetic anxiety impeded the exertion of his intellectual powers : but I am inclined to think that he was, during this time, sketching the outlines of his great philological work.

None of his letters during those years are extant, so far as I can discover. This is much to be regretted. It might afford some entertainment to see how he then expressed himself to his private friends concerning State affairs. Dr. Adams informs me that ‘at this time a favourite object which he had in contemplation was the *Life of Alfred* ; in which, from the warmth with which he spoke about it, he would, I believe, had he been master of his own will, have engaged himself, rather than on any other subject.’

In 1747 it is supposed that the *Gentleman's Magazine* for May was enriched by him with five short poetical pieces, distinguished by three asterisks. The first is a translation, or rather a paraphrase, of a Latin Epitaph on Sir Thomas Hanmer. Whether the Latin was his or not I have never heard, though I should think it probably was, if it be certain that he wrote the English ; as to which my only cause of doubt is that his slighting character of Hanmer as an editor, in his *Observations on Macbeth*, is very different from that in the Epitaph. It may be said that there is the same contrariety between the character in the *Observations* and that in his own Preface to Shakespeare ; but a considerable time elapsed between the one publication and the other, whereas the *Observations* and

the Epitaph came close together. The others are, 'To Miss —, on her giving the Author a gold and silk network Purse of her own weaving'; 'Stella in Mourning'; 'The Winter's Walk'; 'An Ode'; and 'To Lyce, an elderly Lady.' I am not positive that all these were his productions;<sup>1</sup> but as 'The Winter's Walk' has never been controverted to be his, and all of them have the same mark, it is reasonable to conclude that they are all written by the same hand. Yet to the Ode, in which we find a passage very characteristic of him, being a learned description of the gout,

'Unhappy, whom to beds of pain  
Arthritic tyranny consigns,'

there is the following note, 'The author being ill of the gout': but Johnson was not attacked with that distemper till a very late period of his life. May not this, however, be a poetical fiction? Why may not a poet suppose himself to have the gout, as well as suppose himself to be in love, of which we have innumerable instances, and which has been admirably ridiculed by Johnson in his *Life of Cowley*? I have also some difficulty to believe that he could produce such a group of *conceits* as appear in the verses to Lyce, in which he claims for this ancient personage as good a right to be assimilated to *heaven* as nymphs whom other poets have flattered; he therefore ironically

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<sup>1</sup> [In the *Universal Visiter*, to which Johnson contributed, the mark which is affixed to some pieces unquestionably his is also found subjoined to others, of which he certainly was not the author. The mark, therefore, will not ascertain the poems in question to have been written by him. Some of them were probably the productions of Hawkesworth, who, it is believed, was afflicted with the gout. The verses on a Purse were inserted afterwards in Mrs. Williams's *Miscellanies*, and are, unquestionably, Johnson's.—M.]



ascribes to her the attributes of the *sky*, in such stanzas as this :

‘ Her teeth the *night* with *darkness* dies,  
 She’s *starr’d* with pimples o’er ;  
 Her tongue like nimble *lightning* plies,  
 And can with *thunder* roar.’

But as at a very advanced age he could condescend to trifle in *namby-pamby* rhymes to please Mrs. Thrale and her daughter, he may have, in his earlier years, composed such a piece as this.

It is remarkable that in this first edition of ‘The Winter’s Walk’ the concluding line was much more Johnsonian than it was afterwards printed ; for in subsequent editions, after praying Stella to ‘snatch him to her arms,’ he says,

‘ And *shield* me from the *ills* of life ’ ;

whereas in the first edition it is

‘ And *hide* me from the *sight* of life.’

A horror at life in general is more consonant with Johnson’s habitual gloomy cast of thought.

I have heard him repeat with great energy the following verses, which appeared in the *Gentleman’s Magazine* for April this year ; but I have no authority to say they were his own. Indeed one of the best critics of our age suggests to me that ‘the word *indifferently* being used in the sense of *without concern*, and being also very unpoetical, renders it improbable that they should have been his composition.’

*On Lord Lovat’s Execution*

‘ Pitied by *gentle minds* Kilmarnock died ;  
 The *brave*, Balmerino, were on thy side ;  
 Radcliffe, unhappy in his crimes of youth,  
 Steady in what he still mistook for truth,

Beheld his death so decently unmoved,  
 The *soft* lamented, and the *brave* approved.  
 But Lovat's fate indifferently we view,  
 True to no *King*, to no *religion* true :  
 No *fair* forgets the *ruin* he has done ;  
 No *child* laments the *tyrant* of his *son* ;  
 No *tory* pities, thinking what he was ;  
 No *whig* compassions, for he left the *cause* ;  
 The *brave* regret not, for he was not brave !  
 The *honest* mourn not, knowing him a knave.<sup>1</sup>

This year his old pupil and friend, David Garrick, having become joint patentee and manager of Drury Lane theatre, Johnson honoured his opening of it with a Prologue, which for just and manly dramatic criticism on the whole range of the English stage, as well as for poetical excellence,<sup>2</sup> is unrivalled. Like the celebrated epilogue to the *Distressed Mother*, it was, during the season, often called for by the audience. The most striking and brilliant passages of it have been so often repeated, and are so well recollected by all the lovers of the drama and of

<sup>1</sup> These verses are somewhat too severe on the extraordinary person who is the chief figure in them, for he was undoubtedly brave. His pleasantry during his solemn trial (in which, by the way, I have heard Mr. David Hume observe, that we have one of the very few speeches of Mr. Murray, now Earl of Mansfield, authentically given) was very remarkable. When asked if he had any questions to put to Sir Everard Fawkener, who was one of the strongest witnesses against him, he answered, 'I only wished him joy of his young wife'; and after sentence of death, in the horrible terms in such cases of treason, was pronounced upon him, and he was retiring from the bar, he said, 'Fare you well, my lords, we shall not all meet again in one place.' He behaved with perfect composure at his execution, and called out, '*Dulce et decorum est pro patriâ mori.*'

<sup>2</sup> My friend Mr. Courtenay, whose eulogy on Johnson's Latin poetry has been inserted in this work, is no less happy in praising his English poetry :

'But hark, he sings ! the strain e'en Pope admires ;  
 Indignant virtue her own bard inspires.  
 Sublime as Juvenal he pours his lays,  
 And with the Roman shares congenial praise ;—  
 In glowing numbers now he fires the age,  
 And Shakespeare's sun relumes the clouded stage.

poetry, that it would be superfluous to point them out. In the *Gentleman's Magazine* for December this year he inserted an 'Ode on Winter,' which is, I think, an admirable specimen of his genius for lyric poetry.

But the year 1747 is distinguished as the epoch when Johnson's arduous and important work, his *Dictionary of the English Language*, was announced to the world by the publication of its Plan or Prospectus.

How long this immense undertaking had been the object of his contemplation I do not know. I once asked him by what means he had attained to that astonishing knowledge of our language by which he was enabled to realise a design of such extent and accumulated difficulty. He told me that 'it was not the effect of particular study, but that it had grown up in his mind insensibly.' I have been informed by Mr. James Dodsley that several years before this period, when Johnson was one day sitting in his brother Robert's shop, he heard his brother suggest to him that a dictionary of the English language would be a work that would be well received by the public; that Johnson seemed at first to catch at the proposition, but after a pause said, in his abrupt, decisive manner, 'I believe I shall not undertake it.' That he, however, had bestowed much thought upon the subject before he published his 'Plan' is evident from the enlarged, clear, and accurate views which it exhibits; and we find him mentioning in that tract that many of the writers whose testimonies were to be produced as authorities were selected by Pope, which proves that he had been

furnished, probably by Mr. Robert Dodsley, with whatever hints that eminent poet had contributed towards a great literary project that had been the subject of important consideration in a former reign.

The booksellers who contracted with Johnson, single and unaided, for the execution of a work which in other countries has not been effected but by the co-operating exertions of many, were Mr. Robert Dodsley, Mr. Charles Hitch, Mr. Andrew Millar, the two Messieurs Longman, and the two Messieurs Knapton. The price stipulated was £1575.

The 'Plan' was addressed to Philip Dormer, Earl of Chesterfield, then one of his Majesty's Principal Secretaries of State, a nobleman who was very ambitious of literary distinction, and who, upon being informed of the design, had expressed himself in terms very favourable to its success. There is, perhaps, in everything of any consequence, a secret history which it would be amusing to know, could we have it authentically communicated. Johnson told me,<sup>1</sup> 'Sir, the way in which the plan of my dictionary came to be inscribed to Lord Chesterfield was this: I had neglected to write it by the time appointed. Dodsley suggested a desire to have it addressed to Lord Chesterfield. I laid hold of this as a pretext for delay, that it might be better done, and let Dodsley have his desire. I said to my friend, Dr. Bathurst, "Now, if any good comes of my addressing to Lord Chesterfield, it will be ascribed to deep policy, when, in fact, it was only a casual excuse for laziness."' "

It is worthy of observation that the 'Plan' has not

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<sup>1</sup> September 22, 1777, going from Ashbourne, in Derbyshire, to see Islam.

only the substantial merit of comprehension, perspicuity, and precision, but that the language of it is unexceptionably excellent, it being altogether free from that inflation of style and those uncommon but apt and energetic words which in some of his writings have been censured, with more petulance than justice; and never was there a more dignified strain of compliment than that in which he courts the attention of one who he had been persuaded to believe would be a respectable patron.

‘With regard to question of purity or propriety (says he), I was once in doubt whether I should not attribute to myself too much in attempting to decide them, and whether my province was to extend beyond the proposition of the question and the display of the suffrages on each side; but I have been since determined by your Lordship’s opinion to interpose my own judgment, and shall therefore endeavour to support what appears to me most consonant to grammar and reason. Ausonius thought that modesty forbade him to plead inability for a task to which Cæsar had judged him equal:

“Cur me posse negem, posse quod ille putat?”<sup>1</sup>

And I may hope, my Lord, that since you, whose authority in our language is so generally acknowledged, have commissioned me to declare my own opinion, I shall be considered as exercising a kind of vicarious jurisdiction; and that the power which might have been denied to my own claim will be readily allowed me as the delegate of your Lordship.’

This passage proves, that Johnson’s addressing his ‘Plan’ to Lord Chesterfield was not merely in consequence of the result of a report by means of Dodsley, that the Earl favoured the design; but that there had been a particular communication with his Lordship concerning it. Dr. Taylor told me that Johnson sent

<sup>1</sup> Ausonius Theodosio Augusto, v. 12.

his 'Plan' to him in manuscript for his perusal: and that when it was lying upon his table, Mr. William Whitehead happened to pay him a visit, and being shown it, was highly pleased with such parts of it as he had time to read, and begged to take it home with him, which he was allowed to do; that from him it got into the hands of a noble Lord, who carried it to Lord Chesterfield. When Taylor observed this might be an advantage, Johnson replied, 'No, sir, it would have come out with more bloom if it had not been seen before by anybody.'

The opinion conceived of it by another noble author appears from the following extract of a letter from the Earl of Orrery to Dr. Birch:—

'Caledon, Dec. 30, 1747.

'I have just now seen the specimen of Mr. Johnson's *Dictionary* addressed to Lord Chesterfield. I am much pleased with the plan, and I think the specimen is one of the best that I have ever read. Most specimens disgust, rather than prejudice us in favour of the work to follow: but the language of Mr. Johnson's is good, and the arguments are properly and modestly expressed. However, some expressions may be cavilled at, but they are trifles. I'll mention one, the *barren* laurel. The laurel is not barren, in any sense whatever: it bears fruits and flowers. *Sed hæc sunt nugæ*, and I have great expectations from the performance.'<sup>1</sup>

That he was fully aware of the arduous nature of the undertaking, he acknowledges; and shows himself perfectly sensible of it in the conclusion of his 'Plan'; but he had a noble consciousness of his own abilities, which enabled him to go on with undaunted spirit.

Dr. Adams found him one day busy at his *Dictionary*, when the following dialogue ensued. 'Adams: This

<sup>1</sup> Birch MSS., Brit. Mus. 4303.

is a great work, sir. How are you to get all the etymologies? Johnson: Why, sir, here is a shelf with Junius and Skinner and others; and there is a Welsh gentleman who has published a collection of Welsh proverbs who will help me with the Welsh. Adams: But, sir, how can you do this in three years? Johnson: Sir, I have no doubt that I can do it in three years. Adams: But the French Academy, which consists of forty members, took forty years to compile their dictionary. Johnson: Sir, thus it is. This is the proportion. Let me see; forty times forty is sixteen hundred. As three to sixteen hundred, so is the proportion of an Englishman to a Frenchman.' With so much ease and pleasantry could he talk of that prodigious labour which he had undertaken to execute.

The public has had, from another pen,<sup>1</sup> a long detail of what had been done in this country by prior lexicographers; and no doubt Johnson was wise to avail himself of them, so far as they went; but the learned yet judicious research of etymology, the various yet accurate display of definition, and the rich collection of authorities, were reserved for the superior mind of our great philologist. For the mechanical part he employed, as he told me, six amanuenses; and let it be remembered by the natives of North Britain, to whom he is supposed to have been so hostile, that five of them were of that country. There were two Messieurs Macbean; Mr. Shiels, who we shall hereafter see partly wrote the *Lives of the Poets* to which the name of Cibber is affixed;<sup>2</sup> Mr.

<sup>1</sup> See Sir John Hawkins's *Life of Johnson*.

<sup>2</sup> See vol. iii. under April 10, 1776.

Stewart, son of Mr. George Stewart, bookseller at Edinburgh ; and a Mr. Maitland. The sixth of these humble assistants was Mr. Peyton, who, I believe, taught French, and published some elementary tracts.

To all these painful labourers Johnson showed a never-ceasing kindness, so far as they stood in need of it. The elder Mr. Macbean had afterwards the honour of being librarian to Archibald, Duke of Argyll, for many years, but was left without a shilling. Johnson wrote for him a preface to *A System of Ancient Geography* ; and, by the favour of Lord Thurlow, got him admitted a poor brother of the Charterhouse. For Shiels, who died of a consumption, he had much tenderness ; and it has been thought that some choice sentences in the *Lives of the Poets* were supplied by him. Peyton, when reduced to penury, had frequent aid from the bounty of Johnson, who at last was at the expense of burying him and his wife.

While the *Dictionary* was going forward, Johnson lived part of the time in Holborn, part in Gough Square, Fleet Street ; and he had an upper room fitted up like a counting-house for the purpose, in which he gave to the copyists their several tasks. The words, partly taken from other dictionaries, and partly supplied by himself, having been first written down with spaces left between them, he delivered in writing their etymologies, definitions, and various significations. The authorities were copied from the books themselves, in which he had marked the passages with a black-lead pencil, the traces of which could easily be effaced. I have seen several of them, in which that trouble had not been taken ; so that they were just as when used by the copyists. It is remarkable that he was so







*Rev. Thomas Birch*





*Dr. John Hawkesworth*

attentive in the choice of the passages in which words are authorised, that one may read page after page of his *Dictionary* with improvement and pleasure : and it should not pass unobserved, that he has quoted no author whose writings had a tendency to hurt sound religion and morality.

The necessary expense of preparing a work of such magnitude for the press must have been a considerable deduction from the price stipulated to be paid for the copyright. I understand that nothing was allowed by the booksellers on that account ; and I remember his telling me that a large portion of it having, by mistake, been written upon both sides of the paper, so as to be inconvenient for the compositor, it cost him twenty pounds to have it transcribed upon one side only.

He is now to be considered as ‘tugging at his oar,’ as engaged in a steady continued course of occupation, sufficient to employ all his time for some years ; and which was the best preventive of that constitutional melancholy which was ever lurking about him, ready to trouble his quiet. But his enlarged and lively mind could not be satisfied without more diversity of employment, and the pleasure of animated relaxation.<sup>1</sup> He therefore not only exerted his talents in occasional composition, very different from lexicography, but formed a club in Ivy Lane, Paternoster Row, with a

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<sup>1</sup> [For the sake of relaxation from his literary labours, and probably also for Mrs. Johnson's health, he this summer visited Tunbridge Wells, then a place of much greater resort than it is at present. Here he met Mr. Cibber, Mr. Garrick, Mr. Samuel Richardson, Mr. Whiston, Mr. Onslow (the Speaker), Mr. Pitt, Mr. Lyttelton, and several other distinguished persons. In a print representing some of ‘the remarkable characters’ who were at Tunbridge Wells in 1748 (see *Richardson's Correspondence*), Dr. Johnson stands the first figure.—M.]

view to enjoy literary discussion, and amuse his evening hours. The members associated with him in this little society were his beloved friend Dr. Richard Bathurst, Mr. Hawkesworth, afterwards well known by his writings, Mr. John Hawkins, an attorney,<sup>1</sup> and a few others of different professions.

In the *Gentleman's Magazine* for May of this year he wrote a 'Life of Roscommon,' with Notes; which he afterwards much improved (indenting the notes into text), and inserted amongst his *Lives of the English Poets*.

Mr. Dodsley this year brought out his *Preceptor*, one of the most valuable books for the improvement of young minds that has appeared in any language; and to this meritorious work Johnson furnished the 'preface,' containing a general sketch of the book, with a short and perspicuous recommendation of each article; as also 'The Vision of Theodore the Hermit, found in his Cell,' a most beautiful allegory of human life, under the figure of ascending the mountain of Existence. The Bishop of Dromore heard Dr. Johnson say that he thought this was the best thing he ever wrote.

In January 1749 he published *The Vanity of Human Wishes*, being the Tenth Satire of Juvenal imitated. He, I believe, composed it the preceding year.<sup>2</sup> Mrs.

<sup>1</sup> He was afterwards for several years Chairman of the Middlesex Justices, and upon occasion of presenting an address to the King, accepted the usual offer of knighthood. He is author of *A History of Music*, in five volumes in quarto. By assiduous attendance upon Johnson in his last illness, he obtained the office of one of his executors; in consequence of which the booksellers of London employed him to publish an edition of Dr. Johnson's works, and to write his life.

[This 'Mr. John Hawkins, an attorney,' is Boswell's retort courteous to the only reference Hawkins thought fit to make to him in his (Hawkins's) life of Johnson: 'Mr. James Boswell, a native of Scotland.'—A. B.]

<sup>2</sup> Sir John Hawkins, with solemn inaccuracy, represents this poem as a consequence of the indifferent reception of his tragedy. But the fact is, that the poem was published on the 9th of January, and the tragedy was not acted till the 6th of February following.

Johnson, for the sake of country air, had lodgings at Hampstead, to which he resorted occasionally, and there the greatest part, if not the whole, of this imitation was written. The fervid rapidity with which it was produced is scarcely credible. I have heard him say that he composed seventy lines of it in one day, without putting one of them upon paper till they were finished. I remember when I once regretted to him that he had not given us more of Juvenal's Satires, he said he probably should give more, for he had them all in his head; by which I understood that he had the originals and correspondent allusions floating in his mind, which he could, when he pleased, embody and render permanent without much labour. Some of them, however, he observed, were too gross for imitation.

The profits of a single poem, however excellent, appear to have been very small in the last reign, compared with what a publication of the same size has since been known to yield. I have mentioned upon Johnson's own authority, that for his *London* he had only ten guineas; and now, after his fame was established, he got for his *Vanity of Human Wishes* but five guineas more, as is proved by an authentic document in my possession.<sup>1</sup>

It will be observed that he reserves to himself the right of printing one edition of this satire, which was his practice upon occasion of the sale of all his writings; it being his fixed intention to publish at some

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<sup>1</sup> 'Nov. 24, 1784, I received of Mr. Dodsley fifteen guineas, for which I assign to him the right of copy of an *Imitation of the Tenth Satire of Juvenal*, written by me; reserving to myself the right of printing one edition.

SAM. JOHNSON.'

'London, 29 June 1786. A true copy, from the original in Dr. Johnson's handwriting.

JAS. DODSLEY.'

period, for his own profit, a complete collection of his works.

His *Vanity of Human Wishes* has less of common life, but more of a philosophic dignity than his *London*. More readers, therefore, will be delighted with the pointed spirit of *London*, than with the profound reflection of the *Vanity of Human Wishes*. Garrick, for instance, observed in his sprightly manner, with more vivacity than regard to just discrimination, as is usual with wits, 'When Johnson lived much with the Herveys, and saw a good deal of what was passing in life, he wrote his *London*, which is lively and easy. When he became more retired, he gave us his *Vanity of Human Wishes*, which is as hard as Greek. Had he gone on to imitate another satire, it would have been as hard as Hebrew.'<sup>1</sup>

But the *Vanity of Human Wishes* is, in the opinion of the best judges, as high an effort of ethic poetry as any language can show. The instances of variety of disappointment are chosen so judiciously, and painted so strongly, that, the moment they are read, they bring conviction to every thinking mind. That of the scholar must have depressed the too sanguine expectations of many an ambitious student.<sup>2</sup> That of

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<sup>1</sup> From Mr. Langton.

<sup>2</sup> In this poem one of the instances mentioned of unfortunate learned men is *Lydiat*:

'Hear Lydiat's life, and Galileo's end.'

The history of Lydiat being little known, the following account of him may be acceptable to many of my readers. It appeared as a note in the supplement to the *Gentleman's Magazine* for 1748, in which some passages extracted from Johnson's poem were inserted, and it should have been added in the subsequent editions:—'A very learned divine and mathematician, fellow of New College, Oxon, and rector of Oker-ton, near Banbury. He wrote, among many others, a Latin Treatise, "*De Natura cœli, etc.*," in which he attacked the sentiments of Scaliger and Aristotle, not bearing to hear it urged, *that some things*



the warrior Charles of Sweden is, I think, as highly finished a picture as possibly can be conceived.

Were all the other excellencies of this poem annihilated, it must ever have our grateful reverence from its noble conclusion ; in which we are consoled with the assurance that happiness may be attained, if we ' apply our hearts ' to piety :—

' Where then shall hope and fear their objects find ?  
 Shall dull suspense corrupt the stagnant mind ?  
 Must helpless man, in ignorance sedate,  
 Roll darkling down the torrent of his fate ?  
 Shall no dislike alarm, no wishes rise,  
 No cries attempt the mercy of the skies ?  
 Inquirer, cease ; petitions yet remain,  
 Which Heaven may hear, nor deem religion vain.  
 Still raise for good the supplicating voice,  
 But leave to Heaven the measure and the choice ;  
 Safe in his hand, whose eye discerns afar  
 The secret ambush of a specious prayer ;  
 Implore his aid, in his decisions rest,  
 Secure, whate'er he gives, he gives the best ;  
 Yet when the sense of sacred presence fires,  
 And strong devotion to the skies aspires,  
 Pour forth thy fervours for a healthful mind,  
 Obedient passions, and a will resign'd ;  
 For love, which scarce collective man can fill ;  
 For patience, sovereign o'er transmuted ill ;  
 For faith, which panting for a happier seat,  
 Counts death kind Nature's signal for retreat ;

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*are true in philosophy and false in divinity.* He made above six hundred sermons on the harmony of the Evangelists. Being unsuccessful in publishing his works, he lay in the prison of Bocardo at Oxford, and in the King's Bench, till Bishop Usher, Dr. Laud, Sir William Boswell, and Dr. Pink, released him by paying his debts. He petitioned King Charles I. to be sent into Ethiopia, etc. to procure mss. Having spoken in favour of monarchy and bishops, he was plundered by the Parliament forces, and twice carried away prisoner from his rectory ; and afterwards had not a shirt to shift him in three months, without he borrowed it, and died very poor in 1646.

These goods for man the laws of Heaven ordain,  
 These goods he grants, who grants the power to gain;  
 With these celestial wisdom calms the mind,  
 And makes the happiness she does not find.' <sup>1</sup>

Garrick being now vested with theatrical power by being manager of Drury Lane Theatre, he kindly and generously made use of it to bring out Johnson's tragedy, which had been long kept back for want of encouragement. But in this benevolent purpose he met with no small difficulty from the temper of Johnson, which could not brook that a drama which he had formed with much study, and had been obliged to keep more than the nine years of Horace, should be revised and altered at the pleasure of an actor.

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<sup>1</sup> [In this poem, a line, in which the danger attending on female beauty is mentioned, has very generally, I believe, been misunderstood:—

'Yet Vane could tell what ills from beauty spring,  
 And Sedley cursed the form that pleased a king.'

The lady mentioned in the first of these verses was not the celebrated Lady Vane whose memoirs were given to the public by Dr. Smollett, but Anne Vane, who was mistress to Frederick, Prince of Wales, and died in 1736, not long before Johnson settled in London. Some account of this lady was published under the title of *The Secret History of Vanella*, 8vo, 1732. See also *Vanella in the Straw*, 4to, 1732. In Mr. Boswell's *Tour to the Hebrides*, we find some observations respecting the lines in question:—

'In Dr. Johnson's *Vanity of Human Wishes* there is the following passage:—

"The teeming mother anxious for her race,  
 Beggars for each birth the fortune of a face;  
 Yet Vane," etc.

'Lord Hailes told him [Johnson] he was mistaken in the instances he had given of unfortunate fair ones, for neither Vane nor Sedley had a title to that description.' His lordship therefore thought fit that the lines should rather have run thus:—

Yet *Shore* could tell —  
 And *Valiere* cursed —

'Our friend (he adds in a subsequent note addressed to Mr. Boswell on this subject) chose Vane, who was far from being well-looking, and Sedley, who was so ugly that Charles II. said his brother had her by way of penance.'—M.]

Yet Garrick knew well that without some alterations it would not be fit for the stage. A violent dispute having ensued between them, Garrick applied to the Reverend Dr. Taylor to interpose. Johnson was at first very obstinate. 'Sir (said he), the fellow wants me to make Mahomet run mad, that he may have an opportunity of tossing his hands and kicking his heels.'<sup>1</sup> He was, however, at last, with difficulty, prevailed on to comply with Garrick's wishes, so as to allow of some changes ; but still there were not enough.

Dr. Adams was present the first night of the representation of *Irene*, and gave me the following account : 'Before the curtain drew up, there were cat-calls whistling, which alarmed Johnson's friends. The Prologue, which was written by himself in a manly strain, soothed the audience,<sup>2</sup> and the play went off tolerably till it came to the conclusion, when Mrs. Pritchard, the heroine of the piece, was to be strangled upon the stage, and was to speak two lines with the bow-string round her neck. The audience cried out '*Murder!*'

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<sup>1</sup> Mahomet was in fact played by Mr. Barry, and Demetrius by Mr. Garrick : but probably at this time the parts were not yet cast.

<sup>2</sup> The expression used by Dr. Adams was 'soothed.' I should rather think the audience was *awed* by the extraordinary spirit and dignity of the following lines :—

'Be this at least his praise, be this his pride,  
To force applause no modern arts are tried ;  
Should partial cat-calls all his hopes confound,  
He bids no trumpet quell the fatal sound ;  
Should welcome sleep relieve the weary wit,  
He rolls no thunders o'er the drowsy pit ;  
No snares to captivate the judgment spreads,  
Nor bribes your eyes to prejudice your heads.  
Unmoved, though witslings sneer and rivals rail,  
Studios to please, yet not ashamed to fail,  
He scorns the meek address, the suppliant strain,  
With merit needless, and without it vain ;  
In Reason, Nature, Truth, he dares to trust ;  
Ye fops, be silent, and, ye wits, be just !'

*Murder!*'<sup>1</sup> She several times attempted to speak, but in vain. At last she was obliged to go off the stage alive. This passage was afterwards struck out, and she was carried off to be put to death behind the scenes, as the play now has it. The Epilogue, as Johnson informed me, was written by Sir William Yonge. I know not how his play came to be thus graced by the pen of a person then so eminent in the political world.

Notwithstanding all the support of such performers as Garrick, Barry, Mrs. Cibber, Mrs. Pritchard, and every advantage of dress and decoration, the tragedy of *Irene* did not please the public.<sup>2</sup> Mr. Garrick's zeal carried it through for nine nights, so that the author had his three nights' profits; and from a receipt signed by him, now in the hands of Mr. James Dodsley, it appears that his friend, Mr. Robert Dodsley, gave him £100 for the copy, with his usual reservation of the right of one edition.

*Irene*, considered as a poem, is entitled to the praise of superior excellence. Analysed into parts, it will furnish a rich store of noble sentiments, fine imagery, and beautiful language; but it is deficient in pathos,

<sup>1</sup> [This shows how ready modern audiences are to condemn in a new play what they have frequently endured very quietly in an old one. Rowe has made Moneses in *Tamerlane* die by the bow-string, without offence.—M.]

<sup>2</sup> [I know not what Sir John Hawkins means by the *cold reception* of *Irene*. [See note, p. 164.] I was at the first representation and most of the subsequent. It was much applauded the first night, particularly the speech on *to-morrow*. It ran nine nights at least. It did not indeed become a stock play, but there was not the least opposition during the representation, except in the first night in the last act, where Irene was to be strangled on the stage, which John could not bear, though a dramatic poet may stab or slay by hundreds. The bow-string was not a Christian nor an ancient Greek or Roman death. But this offence was removed after the first night and Irene went off the stage to be strangled. Many stories were circulated at the time of the author's being observed at the representation to be dissatisfied with some of the speeches and conduct of the play, himself; and, like Lafontaine, expressing his disapprobation aloud.—BURNBY.]



*Spranger Barry*



in that delicate power of touching the human feelings, which is the principal end of the drama.<sup>1</sup> Indeed Garrick has complained to me that Johnson not only had not the faculty of producing the impressions of tragedy, but that he had not the sensibility to perceive them. His great friend Mr. Walmsley's prediction that he would 'turn out a fine tragedy-writer,' was, therefore, ill-founded. Johnson was wise enough to be convinced that he had not the talents necessary to write successfully for the stage, and never made another attempt in that species of composition.

When asked how he felt upon the ill success of his tragedy, he replied, 'Like the Monument,' meaning that he continued firm and unmoved as that column. And let it be remembered, as an admonition to the *genus irritabile* of dramatic writers, that this great man, instead of peevishly complaining of the bad taste of the town, submitted to its decision without a murmur. He had, indeed, upon all occasions a great deference for the general opinion: 'A man (said he) who writes a book thinks himself wiser or wittier than the rest of mankind; he supposes that he can instruct or amuse them, and the public to whom he appeals, must, after all, be the judges of his pretensions.'

On occasion of this play being brought upon the stage, Johnson had a fancy that as a dramatic author

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<sup>1</sup> Aaron Hill (vol. ii. p. 355), in a letter to Mr. Mallet, gives the following account of *Irene* after having seen it: 'It was at the anomalous Mr. Johnson's benefit, and found the play his proper representative; strong sense ungraced by sweetness or decorum.'

[A gentleman of the name of Pot is said to have expressed the opinion that *Irene* was the finest tragedy of modern times, but on this judgment being made known to Johnson he was heard to mutter, 'If Pot says so, Pot lies.'—A. B.]

his dress should be more gay than what he ordinarily wore; he therefore appeared behind the scenes, and even in one of the side boxes, in a scarlet waistcoat, with rich gold lace, and a gold-laced hat. He humorously observed to Mr. Langton, 'that when in that dress he could not treat people with the same ease as when in his usual plain clothes.' Dress, indeed, we must allow, has more effect even upon strong minds than one should suppose, without having had the experience of it. His necessary attendance while his play was in rehearsal, and during its performance, brought him acquainted with many of the performers of both sexes, which produced a more favourable opinion of their profession than he had harshly expressed in his *Life of Savage*. With some of them he kept up an acquaintance as long as he and they lived, and was ever ready to show them acts of kindness. He for a considerable time used to frequent the green-room, and seemed to take delight in dissipating his gloom by mixing in the sprightly chit-chat of the motley circle then to be found there. Mr. David Hume related to me from Mr. Garrick, that Johnson at last denied himself this amusement, from considerations of rigid virtue, saying, 'I'll come no more behind your scenes, David; for the silk stockings and white bosoms of your actresses excite my amorous propensities.'<sup>1</sup>

In 1750 he came forth in the character for which he was eminently qualified, a majestic teacher of moral and religious wisdom. The vehicle which he chose

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<sup>1</sup> [This famous saying is at third hand—Johnson said it to Garrick, Garrick repeated it to Hume, who told it to Boswell. John Wilkes had his own version of the saying.—A. B.]



was that of a periodical paper, which he knew had been, upon former occasions, employed with great success. *The Tatler*, *Spectator*, and *Guardian* were the last of the kind published in England, which had stood the test of a long trial; and such an interval had now elapsed since their publication as made him justly think that, to many of his readers, this form of instruction would, in some degree, have the advantage of novelty. A few days before the first of his essays came out, there started another competitor for fame in the same form, under the title of *The Tatler Revived*, which I believe was ‘born but to die.’ Johnson was, I think, not very happy in the choice of his title—*The Rambler*, which certainly is not suited to a series of grave and moral discourses; which the Italians have literally, but ludicrously, translated by *Il Vagabondo*; and which has been lately assumed as the denomination of a vehicle of licentious tales, *The Rambler’s Magazine*. He gave Sir Joshua Reynolds the following account of its getting its name: ‘What *must* be done, sir, *will* be done. When I was to begin publishing that paper, I was at a loss how to name it. I sat down at night upon my bedside, and resolved that I would not go to sleep till I had fixed its title. *The Rambler* seemed the best that occurred, and I took it.’<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> I have heard Dr. Warton mention that he was at Mr. Robert Dodsley’s with the late Mr. Moore, and several of his friends, considering what should be the name of the periodical paper which Moore had undertaken. Garrick proposed the *Sallad*, which, by a curious coincidence, was afterwards applied to himself by Goldsmith:—

‘Our Garrick’s a sallad, for in him we see  
Oil, vinegar, sugar, and saltness agree!’

At last, the company having separated, without anything of which they approved having been offered, Dodsley himself thought of *The World*.

With what devout and conscientious sentiments this paper was undertaken, is evidenced by the following prayer, which he composed and offered up on the occasion: 'Almighty God, the giver of all good things, without whose help all labour is ineffectual, and without whose grace all wisdom is folly; grant, I beseech Thee, that in this undertaking Thy Holy Spirit may not be withheld from me, but that I may promote Thy glory, and the salvation of myself and others; grant this, O Lord, for the sake of Thy Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.'<sup>1</sup>

The first paper of *The Rambler* was published on Tuesday the 20th of March 1749-50, and its author was enabled to continue it without interruption, every Tuesday and Saturday, till Saturday the 17th of March,<sup>2</sup> 1752, on which day it closed. This is a strong confirmation of the truth of a remark of his, which I have had occasion to quote elsewhere,<sup>3</sup> that 'a man may write at any time if he will set himself doggedly to it'; for, notwithstanding his constitutional indolence, his depression of spirits, and his labour in carrying on his *Dictionary*, he answered the stated calls of the press twice a week from the stores of his mind during all that time; having received no assistance, except four billets in No. 10 by Miss Mulso, now Mrs. Chapone; No. 30 by Mrs. Catherine Talbot; No. 97 by Mr. Samuel Richardson, whom he describes in

<sup>1</sup> *Prayers and Meditations.*

<sup>2</sup> [This is a mistake into which the author was very pardonably led by the inaccuracy of the original folio edition of *The Rambler*, in which the concluding paper of that work is dated on 'Saturday, March 17.' But Saturday was in fact the *fourteenth* of March. This circumstance, though it may at first appear of very little importance, is yet worth notice; for Mrs. Johnson died on the *seventeenth* of March.—M.]

<sup>3</sup> *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides.*

an introductory note as 'an author who has enlarged the knowledge of human nature and taught the passions to move at the command of virtue'; and Nos. 44 and 100 by Mrs. Elizabeth Carter.

Posterity will be astonished when they are told upon the authority of Johnson himself, that many of these discourses, which we should suppose had been laboured with all the slow attention of literary leisure, were written in haste as the moment pressed, without even being read over by him before they were printed. It can be accounted for only in this way; that by reading and meditation, and a very close inspection of life, he had accumulated a great fund of miscellaneous knowledge, which, by a peculiar promptitude of mind, was ever ready at his call, and which he had constantly accustomed himself to clothe in the most apt and energetic expression. Sir Joshua Reynolds once asked him by what means he had attained his extraordinary accuracy and flow of language. He told him that he had early laid it down as a fixed rule to do his best on every occasion, and in every company: to impart whatever he knew in the most forcible language he could put it in; and that by constant practice, and never suffering any careless expressions to escape him, or attempting to deliver his thoughts without arranging them in the clearest manner, it became habitual to him.<sup>1</sup>

Yet he was not altogether unprepared as a periodical writer; for I have in my possession a small duo-

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<sup>1</sup> [The rule which Mr. Johnson observed is sanctioned by the authority of two great writers of antiquity: 'Ne id quidem tacendum est, quod eidem Ciceroni placuit, nullum nostrum usquam negligentem esse sermonem: *quicquid loquemur, ubicunque, sit pro sua scilicet portione perfectum.*' Quintil. x. 7.—M.]

decimo volume, in which he has written, in the form of Mr. Locke's *Commonplace Book*, a variety of hints for essays on different subjects. He has marked upon the first blank leaf of it, 'To the 128th page, collections for the *Rambler*'; and in another place, 'In fifty-two there were seventeen provided; in 97—21; in 190—25.' At a subsequent period (probably after the work was finished) he added, 'In all, taken of provided materials, 30.'

Sir John Hawkins, who is unlucky upon all occasions, tells us that 'this method of accumulating intelligence had been practised by Mr. Addison, and is humorously described in one of the *Spectators*, wherein he feigns to have dropped his paper of *notanda*, consisting of a diverting medley of broken sentences and loose hints, which he tells us he had collected, and meant to make use of. Much of the same kind is Johnson's *Adversaria*.'<sup>1</sup> But the truth is, that there is no resemblance at all between them. Addison's note was a fiction, in which unconnected fragments of his Incubrations were purposely jumbled together in as odd a manner as he could, in order to produce a laughable effect. Whereas Johnson's abbreviations are all distinct, and applicable to each subject of which the head is mentioned.

For instance, there is the following specimen :

*Youth's Entry, etc.*

'Baxter's account of things in which he had changed his mind as he grew up. Voluminous.—No wonder.—If every man was to tell, or mark, on how many subjects he has changed, it would make vols. but the changes not always

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<sup>1</sup> Hawkins's *Life of Johnson*, p. 268.

observed by man's self.—From pleasure to bus. [*business*] to quiet; from thoughtfulness to reflect. to piety; from dissipation to domestic. by impercept. gradat. but the change is certain. Dial *non progredi, progress. esse conspicimus*. Look back, consider what was thought at some dist. period.

'*Hope predom. in youth. Mind not willingly indulges unpleasing thoughts.* The world lies all enamelled before him, as a distant prospect sun-gilt;<sup>1</sup>—inequalities only found by coming to it. *Love is to be all joy—children excellent—Fame to be constant—caresses of the great—applauses of the learned—smiles of Beauty.*

'*Fear of disgrace—Bashfulness—*Finds things of less importance. Miscarriages forgot like excellences;—if remembered, of no import. Danger of sinking into negligence of reputation—lest the fear of disgrace destroy activity.

'*Confidence in himself.* Long tract of life before him.—No thought of sickness.—Embarrassment of affairs.—Distraction of family. Public calamities.—No sense of the prevalence of bad habits. Negligent of time—ready to undertake—careless to pursue—all changed by time.

'*Confident of others*—unsuspecting as unexperienced—imagining himself secure against neglect, never imagines they will venture to treat him ill. Ready to trust; expecting to be trusted. Convinced by time of the selfishness, the meanness, the cowardice, the treachery of men.

'Youth ambitious, as thinking honours easy to be had.

'Different kinds of praise pursued at different periods. Of the gay in youth.—dang. hurt, etc. despised.

'Of the fancy in manhood. Ambit.—stocks—bargains.—Of the wise and sober in old age—seriousness—formality—maxims, but general—only of the rich, otherwise age is happy—but at last everything referred to riches—no having fame, honour, influence, without subjection to caprice.

'Horace.

'Hard it would be if men entered life with the same views with which they leave it, or left as they enter it.—No hope—no undertaking—no regard to benevolence—no fear of disgrace, etc.

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<sup>1</sup> This most beautiful image of the enchanting delusion of youthful prospect has not been used in any of Johnson's essays.

'Youth to be taught the piety of age—age to retain the honour of youth.'

This, it will be observed, is the sketch of No. 196 of the *Rambler*. I shall gratify my readers with another specimen :

*'Confederacies difficult : why*

'Seldom in war a match for single persons—nor in peace ; therefore kings make themselves absolute. Confederacies in learning—every great work the work of one. *Bruiy*. Scholars' friendship like ladies. *Scribebamus*, etc. *Mart.*<sup>1</sup> The apple of discord—the laurel of discord—the poverty of criticism. Swift's opinion of the power of six geniuses united. That union scarce possible. His remarks just ;—man, a social, not steady, nature. Drawn to man by words, repelled by passions. Orb drawn by attraction, rep. [*repelled*] by centrifugal.

'Common danger unites by crushing other passions—but they return. Equality hinders compliance. Superiority produces insolence and envy. Too much regard in each to private interest ;—too little.

'The mischiefs of private and exclusive societies.—The fitness of social attraction diffused through the whole. The mischiefs of too partial love of our country. Contraction of moral duties.—*Οἱ φίλοι οὐ φίλοι*.

'Every man moves upon his own centre, and therefore repels others from too near a contact, though he may comply with some general laws.

'Of confederacy with superiors every one knows the inconvenience. With equals, no authority ;—every man his own opinion—his own interest.

'Man and wife hardly united ;—scarce ever without children. Computation, if two to one against two, how many against five? If confederacies were easy—useless ;—many oppresses many.—If possible only to some, dangerous. *Principum amicitias.*'

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<sup>1</sup> [Lib. xii. 96: 'In Tuccam æmulum omnium suorum studiorum.'—M.]

Here we see the embryo of No. 45 of the *Adventurer*; and it is a confirmation of what I shall presently have occasion to mention that the papers in that collection marked T. were written by Johnson.

This scanty preparation of materials will not, however, much diminish our wonder at the extraordinary fertility of his mind; for the proportion which they bear to the number of essays which he wrote is very small; and it is remarkable that those for which he had made no preparation are as rich and as highly finished as those for which the hints were lying by him. It is also to be observed that the papers formed from his hints are worked up with such strength and elegance that we almost lose sight of the hints, which become like 'drops in the bucket.' Indeed, in several instances, he has made a very slender use of them, so that many of them remain still unapplied.<sup>1</sup>

As the *Rambler* was entirely the work of one man, there was, of course, such a uniformity in its texture as very much to exclude the charm of variety; and the grave and often solemn cast of thinking, which distinguished it from other periodical papers, made it, for some time, not generally liked. So slowly did this excellent work, of which twelve editions have now

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<sup>1</sup> Sir John Hawkins has selected from this little collection of materials, what he calls the 'Rudiments of two of the papers of the *Rambler*.' But he has not been able to read the manuscript distinctly. Thus he writes, p. 266, 'Sailor's fate any mansion'; whereas the original is, 'Sailor's life my aversion.' He has also transcribed the unappropriated hints on *Writers for bread*, in which he deciphers these notable passages, one in Latin, *fatui non famæ*, instead of *fami non famæ*; Johnson having in his mind what Thuanus says of the learned German antiquary and linguist, Xylander, who, he tells us, lived in such poverty that he was supposed *fami non famæ scribere*; and another in French, *Degouté de fate et affamé d'argent*, instead of *Degouté de fame* (an old word for *renommée*), *et affamé d'argent*. The manuscript being written in an exceedingly small hand, is indeed very hard to read; but it would have been better to have left blanks than to write nonsense.

issued from the press, gain upon the world at large, that even in the closing number the author says, 'I have never been much a favourite of the public.'<sup>1</sup>

Yet, very soon after its commencement, there were who felt and acknowledged its uncommon excellence. Verses in its praise appeared in the newspapers; and the editor of the *Gentleman's Magazine* mentions, in October, his having received several letters to the same purpose from the learned. *The Student*; or, *Oxford and Cambridge Miscellany*, in which Mr. Bonnel Thornton and Mr. Colman were the principal writers, describes it as 'a work that exceeds anything of the kind ever published in this kingdom, some of the *Spectators* excepted—if indeed they may be excepted.'

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<sup>1</sup> [The *Ramblers* certainly were little noticed at first. Smart, the poet, first mentioned them to me as excellent papers, before I had heard any one else speak of them. When I went into Norfolk, in the autumn of 1751, I found but one person (the Rev. Mr. Squires, a man of learning, and a general purchaser of new books), who knew anything of them. But he had been misinformed concerning the true author, for he had been told they were written by a Mr. Johnson of Canterbury, the son of a clergyman who had had a controversy with Bentley; and who had changed the readings of the old ballad entitled *Norton Falgate*, in Bentley's bold style (*meo periculo*), till not a single word of the original song was left. Before I left Norfolk in the year 1760, the *Ramblers* were in high favour among persons of learning and good taste. Others there were, devoid of both, who said that the *hard words* in the *Rambler* were used by the author to render his *Dictionary* indispensably necessary.—BURNEY.]

[It may not be improper to correct a slight error in the preceding note, though it does not at all affect the principal object of Dr. Burney's remark. The clergyman above alluded to was Mr. Richard Johnson, schoolmaster at Nottingham, who in 1717 published an octavo volume in Latin, against Bentley's edition of Horace, entitled *Aristarchus Anti-Bentleianus*. In the middle of this Latin work (as Mr. Bindley observes to me) he has introduced four pages of English criticism, in which he ludicrously corrects, in Bentley's manner, one stanza, not of the ballad the hero of which lived in Norton Falgate, but of a ballad celebrating the achievements of Tom Bostock, who in a sea-fight performed prodigies of valour. The stanza, on which this ingenious writer has exercised his wit, is as follows:

'Then old Tom Bostock he fell to the work,  
He pray'd like a Christian, but fought like a Turk,  
And cut 'em off all in a jerk,  
Which nobody can deny, &c.—M.]



And afterwards, 'May the public favours crown his merits, and may not the English, under the auspicious reign of George the Second, neglect a man, who, had he lived in the first century, would have been one of the greatest favourites of Augustus.' This flattery of the monarch had no effect. It is too well known, that the second George never was an Augustus to learning or genius.

Johnson told me with an amiable fondness, a little pleasing circumstance relative to this work. Mrs. Johnson, in whose judgment and taste he had great confidence, said to him, after a few numbers of the *Rambler* had come out, 'I thought very well of you before; but I did not imagine you could have written anything equal to this.' Distant praise, from whatever quarter, is not so delightful as that of a wife whom a man loves and esteems. Her approbation may be said to 'come home to his bosom'; and being so near, its effect is most sensible and permanent.

Mr. James Elphinston, who has since published various works, and who was ever esteemed by Johnson as a worthy man, happened to be in Scotland while the *Rambler* was coming out in single papers at London. With a laudable zeal at once for the improvement of his countrymen, and the reputation of his friend, he suggested and took the charge of an edition of those essays at Edinburgh, which followed progressively the London publication.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> It was executed in the printing office of Sands, Murray, and Cochran, with uncommon elegance, upon writing paper, of a duodecimo size, and with the greatest correctness; and Mr. Elphinston enriched it with translations of the mottoes. When completed, it made eight handsome volumes. It is, unquestionably, the most accurate and beautiful edition of this work: and there being but a small impression, it is now become scarce, and sells at a very high price.

The following letter written at this time, though not dated, will show how much pleased Johnson was with this publication, and what kindness and regard he had for Mr. Elphinston :

TO MR. JAMES ELPHINSTON

[No date.]

‘DEAR SIR,—I cannot but confess the failures of my correspondence, but hope the same regard which you express for me on every other occasion will incline you to forgive me. I am often, very often, ill ; and, when I am well, am obliged to work : and, indeed, have never much used myself to punctuality. You are, however, not to make unkind inferences, when I forbear to reply to your kindness ; for be assured, I never receive a letter from you without great pleasure, and a very warm sense of your generosity and friendship, which I heartily blame myself for not cultivating with more care. In this, as in many other cases, I go wrong, in opposition to conviction ; for I think scarce any temporal good equally to be desired with the regard and familiarity of worthy men. I hope we shall be some time nearer to each other, and have a more ready way of pouring out our hearts.

‘I am glad that you still find encouragement to proceed in your publication, and shall beg the favour of six more volumes to add to my former six, when you can, with any convenience, send them me. Please to present a set, in my name, to Mr. Ruddiman,<sup>1</sup> of whom I hear that his learning is not his highest excellence. I have transcribed the mottoes, and returned them, I hope not too late, of which I think many very happily performed. Mr. Cave has put the last in the Magazine,<sup>2</sup> in which I think he did well. I beg of you to

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Thomas Ruddiman, the learned grammarian of Scotland, well known for his various excellent works, and for his accurate editions of several authors. He was also a man of a most worthy private character. His zeal for the royal house of Stuart did not render him less estimable in Dr. Johnson's eye.

<sup>2</sup> [If the Magazine here referred to be that for October 1752 (see *Gentleman's Magazine*, vol. xxii. p. 468), then this letter belongs to a later period. If it relates to the Magazine for Sept. 1750 (see *Gentleman's Magazine*, vol. xx. p. 406), then it may be ascribed to the month of October in that year, and should have followed the subsequent letter.—M.]

write soon, and to write often, and to write long letters, which I hope in time to repay you; but you must be a patient creditor. I have, however, this of gratitude, that I think of you with regard, when I do not, perhaps, give the proofs which I ought, of being, sir, your most obliged and most humble servant,

‘SAM. JOHNSON.’

This year he wrote to the same gentleman another letter upon a mournful occasion :

TO MR. JAMES ELPHINSTON

*September 25, 1750.*

‘DEAR SIR,—You have, as I find by every kind of evidence, lost an excellent mother; and I hope you will not think me incapable of partaking of your grief. I have a mother, now eighty-two years of age, whom, therefore, I must soon lose, unless it please God that she should rather mourn for me. I read the letters in which you relate your mother’s death to Mrs. Strahan, and think I do myself honour, when I tell you that I read them with tears; but tears are neither to *you* nor to *me* of any farther use, when once the tribute of nature has been paid. The business of life summons us away from useless grief, and calls us to the exercise of those virtues of which we are lamenting our deprivation. The greatest benefit which one friend can confer upon another, is to guard, and excite, and elevate, his virtues. This your mother will still perform, if you diligently preserve the memory of her life, and of her death; a life, so far as I can learn, useful, wise, and innocent; and a death resigned, peaceful, and holy. I cannot forbear to mention, that neither reason nor revelation denies you to hope, that you may increase her happiness by obeying her precepts; and that she may, in her present state, look with pleasure upon every act of virtue to which her instructions or example have contributed. Whether this be more than a pleasing dream, or a just opinion of separate spirits, is, indeed, of no great importance to us, when we consider ourselves as acting under the eye of God: yet, surely, there is something pleasing in the belief, that our separation from those whom we love is merely corporeal; and it may be a great incitement

to virtuous friendship, if it can be made probable, that that union that has received the divine approbation shall continue to eternity.

‘There is one expedient by which you may, in some degree, continue her presence. If you write down minutely what you remember of her from your earliest years, you will read it with great pleasure, and receive from it many hints of soothing recollection, when time shall remove her yet farther from you, and your grief shall be matured to veneration. To this, however painful for the present, I cannot but advise you, as to a source of comfort and satisfaction in the time to come; for all comfort and all satisfaction is sincerely wished you by, dear sir, your most obliged, most obedient, and most humble servant,

SAM. JOHNSON.’

The *Rambler* has increased in fame as in age. Soon after its first folio edition was concluded, it was published in six duodecimo volumes;<sup>1</sup> and its author lived to see ten numerous editions of it in London, beside those of Ireland and Scotland.

I profess myself to have ever entertained a profound veneration for the astonishing force and vivacity of mind which the *Rambler* exhibits. That Johnson had penetration enough to see, and seeing would not disguise the general misery of man in this state of being, may have given rise to the superficial notion of his being too stern a philosopher. But men of reflection will be sensible that he has given a true representation

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<sup>1</sup> [This is not quite accurate. In the *Gentleman's Magazine* for Nov. 1751, while the work was yet proceeding, is an advertisement announcing that *four* volumes of the *Rambler* would speedily be published; and it is believed that they were published in the next month. The fifth and sixth volumes, with tables of contents and translations of the mottoes, were published in July 1752, by Payne (the original publisher), three months after the close of the work.

When the *Rambler* was collected into volumes, Johnson revised and corrected it throughout. The original octavo edition not having fallen into Mr. Boswell's hands, he was not aware of this circumstance, which has lately been pointed out by Mr. Alexander Chalmers in a new edition of these and various other periodical essays, under the title of the *British Essayists*.—M.]

of human existence, and that he has, at the same time, with a generous benevolence displayed every consolation which our state affords us; not only those arising from the hopes of futurity, but such as may be attained in the immediate progress through life. He has not depressed the soul to despondency and indifference. He has everywhere inculcated study, labour, and exertion. Nay, he has shown, in a very odious light, a man whose practice is to go about darkening the views of others, by perpetual complaints of evil, and awakening those considerations of danger and distress, which are, for the most part, lulled into a quiet oblivion. This he has done very strongly in his character of *Suspicious*,<sup>1</sup> from which Goldsmith took that of *Croaker*, in his comedy of *The Good-natured Man*, as Johnson told me he acknowledged to him, and which is, indeed, very obvious.

To point out the numerous subjects which the *Rambler* treats, with a dignity and perspicuity which are there united in a manner which we shall in vain look for anywhere else, would take up too large a portion of my book, and would, I trust, be superfluous, considering how universally those volumes are now disseminated. Even the most condensed and brilliant sentences which they contain, and which have very properly been selected under the name of 'Beauties,'<sup>2</sup> are of considerable bulk. But I may shortly observe,

<sup>1</sup> No. 55.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Johnson was gratified by seeing this selection, and wrote to Mr. Kearsley, bookseller in Fleet Street, the following note:

'Mr. Johnson sends compliments to Mr. Kearsley, and begs the favour of seeing him as soon as he can. Mr. Kearsley is desired to bring with him the last edition of what he has honoured with the name of "Beauties."

'May 20, 1782.'

that the *Rambler* furnishes such an assemblage of discourses on practical religion and moral duty, of critical investigations, and allegorical and oriental tales, that no mind can be thought very deficient that has, by constant study and meditation, assimilated to itself all that may be found there. No. 7, written in Passion week on abstraction and self-examination, and No. 110, on penitence and the placability of the Divine Nature, cannot be too often read. No. 54, on the effect which the death of a friend should have upon us, though rather too dispiriting, may be occasionally very medicinal to the mind. Every one must suppose the writer to have been deeply impressed by a real scene; but he told me that was not the case, which shows how well his fancy could conduct him to the 'house of mourning.' Some of these more solemn papers, I doubt not, particularly attracted the notice of Dr. Young, the author of *The Night Thoughts*, of whom my estimation is such as to reckon his applause an honour even to Johnson. I have seen volumes of Dr. Young's copy of the *Rambler*, in which he has marked the passages which he thought particularly excellent, by folding down a corner of the page; and such as he rated in a super-eminent degree are marked by double folds. I am sorry that some of the volumes are lost. Johnson was pleased when told of the minute attention with which Young had signified his approbation of his Essays.

I will venture to say, that in no writings whatever can be found more *bark and steel for the mind*, if I may use the expression; more that can brace and invigorate every manly and noble sentiment. No. 32, on patience, even under extreme misery, is wonder-

fully lofty, and as much above the rant of stoicism as the Sun of Revelation is brighter than the twilight of Pagan philosophy. I never read the following sentence without feeling my frame thrill : ‘ I think there is some reason for questioning whether the body and mind are not so proportioned that the one can bear all which can be inflicted on the other ; whether virtue cannot stand its ground as long as life, and whether a soul well principled will not be sooner separated than subdued.’

Though instruction be the predominant purpose of the *Rambler*, yet it is enlivened with a considerable portion of amusement. Nothing can be more erroneous than the notion which some persons have entertained, that Johnson was then a retired author, ignorant of the world ; and, of consequence, that he wrote only from his imagination, when he described characters and manners. He said to me, that before he wrote that work, he had been ‘ running about the world,’ as he expressed it, more than almost anybody ; and I have heard him relate, with much satisfaction, that several of the characters in the *Rambler* were drawn so naturally, that when it first circulated in numbers, a club, in one of the towns in Essex, imagined themselves to be severally exhibited in it, and were much incensed against a person who, they suspected, had thus made them objects of public notice ; nor were they quieted till authentic assurance was given them, that the *Rambler* was written by a person who had never heard of any one of them. Some of the characters are believed to have been actually drawn from the life, particularly that of Prospero from Garrick,<sup>1</sup> who

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<sup>1</sup> [That of Gelidus in No. 24, from Professor Colson (see p. 70 of this vol.), and that of Euphues in the same paper, which, with many

never entirely forgave its pointed satire. For instances of fertility of fancy, and accurate description of real life, I appeal to No. 19, a man who wanders from one profession to another, with most plausible reasons for every change: No. 34, female fastidiousness and timorous refinement: No. 82, a virtuoso who has collected curiosities: No. 83, petty modes of entertaining a company, and conciliating kindness: No. 182, fortune hunting: No. 194-195, a tutor's account of the follies of his pupil: No. 197-198, legacy hunting. He has given a specimen of his nice observation of the mere external appearances of life, in the following passage in No. 179, against affectation, that frequent and most disgusting quality: 'He that stands to contemplate the crowds that fill the streets of a populous city, will see many passengers, whose air and motions it will be difficult to behold without contempt and laughter; but if he examine what are the appearances that thus powerfully excite his risibility, he will find among them neither poverty nor disease, nor any involuntary or painful defect. The disposition to derision and insult is awakened by the softness of foppery, the swell of insolence, the liveliness of levity, or the solemnity of grandeur; by the sprightly trip, the stately stalk, the formal strut, and the lofty mien; by gestures intended to catch the eye, and by looks elaborately formed as evidences of importance.'

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others, was doubtless drawn from the life. Euphues, I once thought, might have been intended to represent either Lord Chesterfield or Soame Jenyns; but Mr. Bindley, with more probability, thinks that George Bubbs Dodington, who was remarkable for the homeliness of his person and the finery of his dress, was the person meant under that character.—M.]



Every page of the *Rambler* shows a mind teeming with classical allusion and poetical imagery: illustrations from other writers are, upon all occasions, so ready, and mingle so easily in his periods, that the whole appears of one uniform vivid texture.

The style of this work has been censured by some shallow critics as involved and turgid, and abounding with antiquated and hard words. So ill-founded is the first part of this objection, that I will challenge all who may honour this book with a perusal, to point out any English writer whose language conveys his meaning with equal force and perspicuity. It must, indeed, be allowed, that the structure of his sentences is expanded, and often has somewhat of the inversion of Latin; and that he delighted to express familiar thoughts in philosophical language; being in this the reverse of Socrates, who, it is said, reduced philosophy to the simplicity of common life. But let us attend to what he himself says in his concluding paper: 'When common words were less pleasing to the ear, or less distinct in their signification, I have familiarised the terms of philosophy, by applying them to popular ideas.'<sup>1</sup> And, as to the second part of this objection, upon a late careful revision of the work, I can with confidence say, that it is amazing how few of those words, for which it has been unjustly characterised, are actually to be found in it; I am sure, not the proportion of one to each paper. This idle charge has been echoed from one babbler to another, who have confounded Johnson's *Essays* with Johnson's *Dictionary*; and because he

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<sup>1</sup> Yet his style did not escape the harmless shafts of pleasant humour; for the ingenious Bonnell Thornton published a mock *Rambler* in the *Drury Lane Journal*.

thought it right in a lexicon of our language to collect many words which had fallen into disuse, but were supported by great authorities, it has been imagined that all of these have been interwoven into his own compositions. That some of them have been adopted by him unnecessarily, may, perhaps, be allowed; but, in general, they are evidently an advantage, for without them his stately ideas would be confined and cramped. ‘He that thinks with more extent than another, will want words of larger meaning.’<sup>1</sup> He once told me, that he had formed his style upon that of Sir William Temple, and upon Chambers’s Proposal for his *Dictionary*.<sup>2</sup> He certainly was mistaken; or if he imagined at first that he was imitating Temple, he was very unsuccessful;<sup>3</sup> for nothing can be more unlike than the simplicity of Temple, and the richness of Johnson. Their styles differ as plain cloth and brocade. Temple, indeed, seems equally erroneous in supposing that he himself had formed his style upon Sandys’s *View of the State of Religion in the Western parts of the World*.

The style of Johnson was, undoubtedly, much formed upon that of the great writers in the last century,

<sup>1</sup> *Idler*, No. 70.

<sup>2</sup> [The Paper here alluded to, was, I believe, Chambers’s Proposal for a second and improved edition of his *Dictionary*, which, I think, appeared in 1738. This Proposal was probably in circulation in 1737, when Johnson first came to London.—M.]

<sup>3</sup> [The author appears to me to have misunderstood Johnson in this instance. He did not, I conceive, mean to say that, when he first began to write, he made Sir William Temple his model, with a view to form a style that should resemble his in all its parts; but that he formed his style on that of Temple and others, by taking from each those characteristic excellences which were most worthy of imitation. See this matter further explained in vol. iii. under April 9, 1778, where, in a conversation at Sir Joshua Reynolds’s, Johnson himself mentions the particular improvements which Temple made in the English style. These, doubtless, were the objects of his imitation, so far as that writer was his model.—M.]

Hooker, Bacon, Sanderson, Hakewell,<sup>1</sup> and others; those 'Giants,' as they were well characterised by a Great Personage, whose authority, were I to name him, would stamp a reverence on the opinion.

We may, with the utmost propriety, apply to his learned style that passage of Horace, a part of which he has taken as the motto to his *Dictionary*:

'Cum tabulis animum censoris sumet honesti:  
Audebit quæcumque parum splendoris habebunt,  
Et sine pondere erunt, et honore indigna ferentur,  
Verba movere loco; quamvis invita recedant,  
Et versentur adhuc intra penetralia Vestæ:  
Obscurata diu populo bonus cruet, atque  
Proferet in lucem speciosa vocabula rerum,  
Quæ priscis memorata Catonibus atque Cethegis,  
Nunc situs informis premit et deserta vetustas:  
Adsciscet nova, quæ genitor produxerit usus:  
Vehemens, et liquidus, puroque simillimus amni,  
Fundet opes, Latiumque beabit divite lingua.'<sup>2</sup>

To so great a master of thinking, to one of such vast and various knowledge as Johnson, might have been allowed a liberal indulgence of that licence which Horace claims in another place:

'Si forte necesse est  
Indiciis monstrare recentibus abdita rerum,  
Fingere cinctutis non exaudita Cethegis  
Continget; dabiturque licentia sumpta pudenter:  
Et nova fictaque nuper habebunt verba fidem, si  
Græco fonte cadent, parce detorta. Quid autem  
Cæcilio Plautoque dabit Romanus, ademptum  
Virgilio Varioque? Ego cur, acquirere pauca

<sup>1</sup> [Hakewell was Rector of Exeter College, Oxford, in 1642, and onwards till his death in 1649. His reputation has disappeared. The Great Personage is of course the King.—A. B.]

<sup>2</sup> Horat. *Epist.* Lib. ii., *Epist.* 2, v. 110.

Si possum, invidetur ; cum lingua Catonis et Enni  
 Sermonem patrium ditaverit, et nova rerum  
 Nomina protulerit ? Licuit, semperque licebit  
 Signatum præsentē nota producere nomen.<sup>1</sup>

Yet Johnson assured me, that he had not taken upon him to add more than four or five words to the English language, of his own information ; and he was very much offended at the general licence by no means ' modestly taken ' in his time, not only to coin new words, but to use many words in senses quite different from their established meaning, and those frequently very fantastical.

Sir Thomas Browne, whose life Johnson wrote, was remarkably fond of Anglo-Latin diction ; and to his example we are to ascribe Johnson's sometimes indulging himself in this kind of phraseology.<sup>2</sup> Johnson's comprehension of mind was the mould for his language. Had his conceptions been narrower, his expression would have been easier. His sentences have a dignified march ; and it is certain that his example has given a general elevation to the language of his country, for many of our best writers have approached very near to him ; and, from the influence which he has had upon our composition, scarcely anything is written now that is not better expressed than was usual before he appeared to lead the national taste.

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<sup>1</sup> Horat. *De Arte Poetica*, v. 48.

<sup>2</sup> The observation of his having imitated Sir Thomas Browne has been made by many people ; and lately it has been insisted on, and illustrated by a variety of quotations from Browne in one of the popular essays written by the Reverend Mr. Knox, Master of Tunbridge School, whom I have set down in my list of those who have sometimes not unsuccessfully imitated Dr. Johnson's style.

[Browne's own style has been most successfully imitated. See the 'Fragment on Mummies.'—*Works*, Wilkins' edition, vol. iv. p. 274.—A. B.]

This circumstance, the truth of which must strike every critical reader, has been so happily enforced by Mr. Courtenay, in his *Moral and Literary Character of Dr. Johnson*, that I cannot prevail on myself to withhold it, notwithstanding his, perhaps, too great partiality for one of his friends :

‘By nature’s gifts ordain’d mankind to rule,  
He, like a Titan, form’d his brilliant school ;  
And taught congenial spirits to excel,  
While from his lips impressive wisdom fell.  
Our boasted Goldsmith felt the sovereign sway ;  
From him derived the sweet, yet nervous lay.  
To Fame’s proud cliff he bade our Raffaele rise ;  
Hence Reynolds’ pen with Reynolds’ pencil vies.  
With Johnson’s flame melodious Burney glows,  
While the grand strain in smoother cadence flows.  
And you, Malone, to critic learning dear,  
Correct and elegant, refined though clear,  
By studying him, acquired that classic taste,  
Which high in Shakespeare’s fane thy statue placed.  
Near Johnson Steevens stands, on scenic ground,  
Acute, laborious, fertile, and profound.  
Ingenious Hawkesworth to this school we owe,  
And scarce the pupil from the tutor know.  
Here early parts accomplish’d Jones sublines,  
And science blends with Asia’s lofty rhymes :  
Harmonious Jones ! who in his splendid strains  
Sings Camdeo’s sports, on Agra’s flowery plains,  
In Hindu fictions while we fondly trace  
Love and the Muses, deck’d with Attic grace.  
Amid these names can Boswell be forgot,  
Scarce by North Britons now esteem’d a Scot ?<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The following observation in Mr. Boswell’s *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides* may sufficiently account for that gentleman’s being ‘now scarcely esteemed a Scot’ by many of his countrymen :—‘If he (Dr. Johnson) was particularly prejudiced against the Scots, it was because they were more in his way ; because he thought their success in England rather exceeded the due proportion of their real merit ; and because he could not but see in them that nationality which, I believe,

Who to the sage devoted from his youth,  
 Imbued from him the sacred love of truth ;  
 The keen research, the exercise of mind,  
 And that best art, the art to know mankind.—  
 Nor was his energy confined alone  
 To friends around his philosophic throne ;  
*Its influence wide improved our letter'd isle,*  
*And lucid vigour mark'd the general style :*  
 As Nile's proud waves, swoln from their oozy bed,  
 First o'er the neighbouring meads majestic spread ;  
 Till, gathering force, they more and more expand,  
 And with new virtue fertilise the land.'

Johnson's language, however, must be allowed to be too masculine for the delicate gentleness of female writing. His ladies, therefore, seem strangely formal, even to ridicule ; and are well denominated by the names which he has given them, as Misella, Zozima, Properantia, Rhodoclia.

It has of late been the fashion to compare the style of Addison and Johnson, and to depreciate, I think, very unjustly, the style of Addison as nerveless and feeble, because it has not the strength and energy of that of Johnson. Their prose may be balanced like the poetry of Dryden and Pope. Both are excellent, though in different ways. Addison writes with the ease of a gentleman. His readers fancy that a wise and accomplished companion is talking to them ; so that he insinuates his sentiments and taste into their minds by an imperceptible influence. Johnson writes like a teacher. He dictates to his readers as if from

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no liberal-minded Scotchman will deny.' Mr. Boswell, indeed, is so free from national prejudices, that he might with equal propriety have been described as—

'Scarce by *South* Britons now esteem'd a Scot.'

—COURTENAY.

an academical chair. They attend with awe and admiration ; and his precepts are impressed upon them by his commanding eloquence. Addison's style, like a light wine, pleases everybody from the first. Johnson's, like a liquor of more body, seems too strong at first, but by degrees is highly relished ; and such is the melody of his periods, so much do they captivate the ear, and seize upon the attention, that there is scarcely any writer, however inconsiderable, who does not aim, in some degree, at the same species of excellence. But let us not ungratefully undervalue that beautiful style, which has pleasingly conveyed to us much instruction and entertainment. Though comparatively weak, opposed to Johnson's Herculean vigour, let us not call it positively feeble. Let us remember the character of his style, as given by Johnson himself :—‘ What he attempted, he performed ; he is *never feeble*, and he did not wish to be energetic ; he is never rapid, and he never stagnates. His sentences have neither studied amplitude, nor affected brevity : his periods, though not diligently rounded, are voluble and easy.<sup>1</sup> Whoever wishes to

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<sup>1</sup> [When Johnson showed me a proof-sheet of the character of Addison, in which he so highly extols his style, I could not help observing that it had not been his own model, as no two styles could differ more from each other.—‘ Sir, Addison had his style, and I have mine.’ When I ventured to ask him whether the difference did not consist in this, that Addison's style was full of idioms, colloquial phrases, and proverbs, and his own more strictly grammatical, and free from such phraseology and modes of speech as can never be literally translated or understood by foreigners, he allowed the discrimination to be just. Let any one who doubts it try to translate one of Addison's *Spectators* into Latin, French, or Italian ; and though so easy, familiar, and elegant to an Englishman as to give the intellect no trouble, yet he would find the transfusion into another language extremely difficult, if not impossible. But a *Rambler*, *Adventurer*, or *Idler* of Johnson would fall into any classical or European language as easily as if it had been originally conceived in it.—BURNEY.]

attain an English style, familiar but not coarse, and elegant but not ostentatious, must give his days and nights to the volumes of Addison.’<sup>1</sup>

Though the *Rambler* was not concluded till the year 1752, I shall, under this year, say all that I have to observe upon it. Some of the translations of the mottoes by himself are admirably done. He acknowledges to have received ‘elegant translations’ of many of them from Mr. James Elphinston; and some are very happily translated by a Mr. *F. Lewis*, of whom I never heard more, except that Johnson thus described him to Mr. Malone: ‘Sir, he lived in London, and hung loose upon society.’<sup>2</sup> The concluding paper of his *Rambler* is at once dignified and pathetic. I cannot, however, but wish, that he had not ended it with an unnecessary Greek verse, translated also into an English couplet. It is too much like the conceit of those dramatic poets, who used to conclude each act with a rhyme; and the expression in the first line of his couplet, ‘*Celestial powers*,’ though proper in Pagan poetry, is ill suited to Christianity, with ‘a conformity’ to which he consoles himself. How much better would it have been to have ended with the prose sentence, ‘I shall never envy the honours which wit and learning obtain in any other cause, if I can be numbered among the writers who have given ardour to virtue and confidence to truth.’

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<sup>1</sup> I shall probably, in another work, maintain the merit of Addison’s poetry, which has been very unjustly depreciated.

<sup>2</sup> [In the *Gentleman’s Magazine* for October 1752, p. 468, he is styled, ‘the Rev. Francis Lewis, of Chiswick.’ Lord Macartney, at my request, made some inquiry concerning him at that place, but no intelligence was obtained.—M.]

[This chance reference to the life of Mr. Lewis powerfully affected the imagination of Carlyle.—A. B.]



His friend, Dr. Birch, being now engaged in preparing an edition of Raleigh's smaller pieces, Dr. Johnson wrote the following letter to that gentleman :

## TO DR. BIRCH

*'Gough Square, May 12, 1750.*

'SIR,—Knowing that you are now preparing to favour the public with a new edition of Raleigh's miscellaneous pieces, I have taken the liberty to send you a manuscript, which fell by chance within my notice. I perceive no proofs of forgery in my examination of it; and the owner tells me that, as he has heard, the handwriting is Sir Walter's. If you should find reason to conclude it genuine, it will be a kindness to the owner, a blind person,<sup>1</sup> to recommend it to the booksellers.—I am, sir, your most humble servant, SAM. JOHNSON.'

His just abhorrence of Milton's political notions was ever strong. But this did not prevent his warm admiration of Milton's great poetical merit, to which he has done illustrious justice, beyond all who have written upon the subject. And this year he not only wrote a Prologue, which was spoken by Mr. Garrick before the acting of *Comus* at Drury Lane theatre, for the benefit of Milton's grand-daughter, but took a very zealous interest in the success of the charity. On the day preceding the performance, he published the following letter in the *General Advertiser*, addressed to the printer of that paper :

'SIR,—That a certain degree of reputation is acquired merely by approving the works of genius, and testifying a regard to the memory of authors, is a truth too evident to be denied; and therefore to ensure a participation of fame with a celebrated poet, many, who would, perhaps, have contri-

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<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Williams is probably the person meant.

buted to starve him when alive, have heaped expensive pageants on his grave.<sup>1</sup>

‘It must, indeed, be confessed, that this method of becoming known to posterity with honour, is peculiar to the great, or at least to the wealthy; but an opportunity now offers for almost every individual to secure the praise of paying a just regard to the illustrious dead, united with the pleasure of doing good to the living. To assist industrious indigence, struggling with distress and debilitated by age, is a display of virtue, and an acquisition of happiness and honour.

‘Whoever, then, would be thought capable of pleasure in reading the works of our incomparable Milton, and not so destitute of gratitude as to refuse to lay out a trifle in rational and elegant entertainment, for the benefit of his living remains, for the exercise of their own virtue, the increase of their reputation, and the pleasing consciousness of doing good, should appear at Drury Lane theatre to-morrow, April 5, when *Comus* will be performed for the benefit of Mrs. Elizabeth Foster, grand-daughter to the author,<sup>2</sup> and the only surviving branch of his family.

‘*N.B.*—There will be a new prologue on the occasion, written by the author of *Irene*, and spoken by Mr. Garrick; and by particular desire, there will be added to the masque a dramatic satire called *Lethe*, in which Mr. Garrick will perform.’

In 1751 we are to consider him as carrying on both his *Dictionary* and *Rambler*. But he also wrote *The Life of Cheynel*, in the miscellany called *The Student*; and the Reverend Dr. Douglas having with uncommon acuteness clearly detected a gross forgery and imposition upon the public by William Lauder, a Scotch schoolmaster, who had, with equal impudence and ingenuity, represented Milton as a plagiarist from certain modern Latin poets, Johnson, who had been

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<sup>1</sup> [Alluding probably to Mr. Auditor Benson. See the *Dunciad*. B. iv.—M.]

<sup>2</sup> [Mrs. Elizabeth Foster died May 9, 1754.—A. CHALMERS.]

so far imposed upon as to furnish a Preface and Postscript to his work, now dictated a letter for Lauder, addressed to Dr. Douglas, acknowledging his fraud in terms of suitable contrition.<sup>1</sup>

This extraordinary attempt of Lauder was no sudden effort. He had brooded over it for many years: and to this hour it is uncertain what his principal motive was, unless it were a vain notion of his superiority, in being able, by whatever means, to deceive mankind. To effect this, he produced certain passages from Grotius, Masenius, and others, which had a faint resemblance to some parts of the *Paradise Lost*. In these he interpolated some fragments of Hog's Latin translation of that poem, alleging that the mass thus fabricated was the archetype from which Milton copied. These fabrications he published from time to time in the *Gentleman's Magazine*; and, exulting in his fancied success, he in 1750 ventured to collect them into a pamphlet, entitled *An Essay on Milton's*

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<sup>1</sup> Lest there should be any person, at any future period, absurd enough to suspect that Johnson was a partaker in Lauder's fraud, or had any knowledge of it, when he assisted him with his masterly pen, it is proper here to quote the words of Dr. Douglas, now Bishop of Salisbury, at the time when he detected the imposition. 'It is to be hoped, nay it *is expected*, that the elegant and nervous writer, whose judicious sentiments and inimitable style point out the author of Lauder's Preface and Postscript, will no longer allow one to *plume himself with his feathers*, who appeareth so little to deserve assistance; an assistance which I am persuaded would never have been communicated, had there been the least suspicion of those facts which I have been the instrument of conveying to the world in these sheets.'—*Milton no Plagiary*, 2nd edit., p. 78. And his Lordship has been pleased now to authorise me to say, in the strongest manner, that there is no ground whatever for any unfavourable reflection against Dr. Johnson, who expressed the strongest indignation against Lauder.

[Lauder renewed his attempts on Milton's character in 1754, in a pamphlet entitled, *The Grand Impostor detected; or, Milton convicted of Forgery against King Charles I.*; which was reviewed, probably by Johnson, in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1754, p. 97.—A. CHALMERS.]

[Lauder afterwards went to Barbadoes, where he died very miserably about the year 1771.—M.]

*Use and Imitation of the Moderns in his Paradise Lost.* To this pamphlet Johnson wrote a Preface, in full persuasion of Lauder's honesty, and a Postscript recommending, in the most persuasive terms, a subscription for the relief of a grand-daughter of Milton, of whom he thus speaks: 'It is yet in the power of a great people to reward the poet whose name they boast, and from their alliance to whose genius they claim some kind of superiority to every other nation of the earth; that poet whose works may possibly be read when every other monument of British greatness shall be obliterated; to reward him, not with pictures or with medals, which, if he sees, he sees with contempt, but with tokens of gratitude, which he perhaps may even now consider as not unworthy the regard of an immortal spirit.' Surely this is inconsistent with 'enmity towards Milton,' which Sir John Hawkins imputes to Johnson upon this occasion, adding, 'I could all along observe that Johnson seemed to approve not only of the design, but of the argument; and seemed to exult in a persuasion that the reputation of Milton was likely to suffer by this discovery. That he was not privy to the imposture, I am well persuaded; that he wished well to the argument may be inferred from the Preface, which indubitably was written by Johnson.' Is it possible for any man of clear judgment to suppose that Johnson, who so nobly praised the poetical excellence of Milton in a Postscript to this very 'discovery,' as he then supposed it, could at the same time exult in a persuasion that the great poet's reputation was likely to suffer by it? This is an inconsistency of which Johnson was incapable; nor can anything more be fairly inferred from the Preface,





*Anna Williams*



than that Johnson, who was alike distinguished for ardent curiosity and love of truth, was pleased with an investigation by which both were gratified. That he was actuated by these motives, and certainly by no unworthy desire to depreciate our great epic poet, is evident from his own words ; for after mentioning the general zeal of men of genius and literature, 'to advance the honour, and distinguish the beauties of *Paradise Lost*,' he says: 'Among the inquiries to which this ardour of criticism has naturally given occasion, none is more obscure in itself, or more worthy of rational curiosity, than a retrospect of the progress of this mighty genius in the construction of his work ; a view of the fabric gradually rising, perhaps from small beginnings, till its foundation rests in the centre, and its turrets sparkle in the skies ; to trace back the structure through all its varieties, to the simplicity of its first plan ; to find what was first projected, whence the scheme was taken, how it was improved, by what assistance it was executed, and from what stores the materials were collected ; whether its founder dug them from the quarries of Nature, or demolished other buildings to embellish his own.'<sup>1</sup> Is this the language of one who wished to blast the laurels of Milton ?

Though Johnson's circumstances were at this time far from being easy, his humane and charitable disposition was constantly exerting itself. Mrs. Anna Williams, daughter of a very ingenious Welsh physician, and a woman of more than ordinary talents and literature, having come to London in hopes of being

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<sup>1</sup> ['Proposals (written evidently by Johnson) for printing the *Adamus Exul* of Grotius, with a Translation and Notes by Wm. Lauder, A.M.—*Gentleman's Magazine*, 1747, vol. xvii. p. 404.—M.]

cured of a cataract in both her eyes, which afterwards ended in total blindness, was kindly received as a constant visitor at his house while Mrs. Johnson lived ; and, after her death, having come under his roof in order to have an operation upon her eyes performed with more comfort to her than in lodgings, she had an apartment from him during the rest of her life, at all times when he had a house.

In 1752 he was almost entirely occupied with his *Dictionary*. The last paper of his *Rambler* was published March 2<sup>1</sup> this year ; after which there was a cessation for some time of any exertion of his talents as an essayist. But, in the same year, Dr. Hawkesworth, who was his warm admirer, and a studious imitator of his style, and then lived in great intimacy with him, began a periodical paper entitled the *Adventurer*, in connection with other gentlemen, one of whom was Johnson's much loved friend, Dr. Bathurst ; and without doubt, they received many valuable hints from his conversation, most of his friends having been so assisted in the course of their works.

That there should be a suspension of his literary labours during a part of the year 1752 will not seem strange when it is considered that soon after closing

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<sup>1</sup> [Here the author's memory failed him, for, according to the account given in a former page (see p. 160), we should here read March 17 ; but in truth, as has been already observed, the *Rambler* closed on Saturday the *fourteenth* of March ; at which time Mrs. Johnson was near her end, for she died on the following Tuesday, March 17. Had the concluding paper of that work been written on the day of her death, it would have been still more extraordinary than it is, considering the extreme grief into which the author was plunged by that event. The melancholy cast of that concluding essay is sufficiently accounted for by the situation of Mrs. Johnson at the time it was written ; and her death three days afterwards put an end to the Paper.—M.]



his *Rambler*, he suffered a loss which, there can be no doubt, affected him with the deepest distress. For on the 17th of March, o.s., his wife died. Why Sir John Hawkins should unwarrantably take upon him even to *suppose* that Johnson's fondness for her was *dissembled* (meaning simulated or assumed), and to assert that if it was not the case, 'it was a lesson he had learned by rote,' I cannot conceive ; unless it proceeded from a want of similar feelings in his own breast. To argue from her being much older than Johnson, or any other circumstances, that he could not really love her, is absurd ; for love is not a subject of reasoning but of feeling, and therefore there are no common principles upon which one can persuade another concerning it. Every man feels for himself, and knows how he is affected by particular qualities in the person he admires, the impressions of which are too minute and delicate to be substantiated in language.

The following very solemn and affecting prayer was found after Dr. Johnson's decease, by his servant, Mr. Francis Barber, who delivered it to my worthy friend the Reverend Mr. Strahan, Vicar of Islington, who at my earnest request has obligingly favoured me with a copy of it, which he and I compared with the original. I present it to the world as an undoubted proof of a circumstance in the character of my illustrious friend, which, though some whose hard minds I never shall envy may attack as superstitious, will, I am sure, endear him more to numbers of good men. I have an additional, and that a personal, motive for presenting it, because it sanctions what I myself have always maintained and am fond to indulge :

'April 26, 1752, being after 12 at night of the 25th.

'O Lord! Governor of heaven and earth, in whose hands are embodied and departed Spirits, if thou hast ordained the Souls of the Dead to minister to the Living, and appointed my departed wife to have care of me, grant that I may enjoy the good effects of her attention and ministration, whether exercised by appearance, impulses, dreams, or in any other manner agreeable to thy Government. Forgive my presumption, enlighten my ignorance, and however meaner agents are employed, grant me the blessed influences of thy Holy Spirit, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.'

What actually followed upon this most interesting piece of devotion by Johnson, we are not informed; but I, whom it has pleased God to afflict in a similar manner to that which occasioned it, have certain experience of benignant communication by dreams.

That his love for his wife was of the most ardent kind, and during the long period of fifty years was unimpaired by the lapse of time, is evident from various passages in the series of his *Prayers and Meditations*, published by the Reverend Mr. Strahan, as well as from other memorials, two of which I select, as strongly marking the tenderness and sensibility of his mind :

'March 28, 1753.—I kept this day as the anniversary of my Tetty's death, with prayer and tears in the morning. In the evening I prayed for her conditionally, if it were lawful.'

'April 23, 1753.—I know not whether I do not too much indulge the vain longings of affection; but I hope they intenerate my heart, and that when I die like my Tetty, this affection will be acknowledged in a happy interview, and that in the meantime I am incited by it to piety. I will, however, not deviate too much from common and received methods of devotion.

Her wedding-ring, when she became his wife, was,

after her death, preserved by him, as long as he lived, with an affectionate care, in a little round wooden box, in the inside of which he pasted a slip of paper, thus inscribed by him in fair characters, as follows :

‘Eheu !  
Eliz. Johnson  
Nupta Jul. 9° 1736,  
Mortua, eheu !  
Mart. 17° 1752.’

After his death, Mr. Francis Barber, his faithful servant and residuary legatee, offered this memorial of tenderness to Mrs. Lucy Porter, Mrs. Johnson’s daughter ; but she having declined to accept of it,<sup>1</sup> he had it enamelled as a mourning-ring for his old master, and presented it to his wife, Mrs. Barber, who now has it.

The state of mind in which a man must be upon the death of a woman whom he sincerely loves had been in his contemplation many years before. In his *Irene* we find the following fervent and tender speech of Demetrius, addressed to his Aspasia :

‘From those bright regions of eternal day,  
Where now thou shin’st amongst thy fellow-saints,  
Array’d in purer light, look down on me !  
In pleasing visions and assuasive dreams,  
O ! soothe my soul, and teach me how to lose thee.’

I have, indeed, been told by Mrs. Desmoulins, who before her marriage lived for some time with Mrs. Johnson at Hampstead, that she indulged herself in

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<sup>1</sup> [She is said to have been angry because her name was not mentioned in Johnson’s will. Yet when she came to die it was noticeable that though her will was made in Johnson’s lifetime, he was not mentioned in it. I have known several Lucy Porters.—A. B.]

country air and nice living, at an unsuitable expense, while her husband was drudging in the smoke of London, and that she by no means treated him with that complacency which is the most engaging quality in a wife. But all this is perfectly compatible with his fondness for her, especially when it is remembered that he had a high opinion of her understanding, and that the impressions which her beauty, real or imaginary, had originally made upon his fancy, being continued by habit, had not been effaced, though she herself was doubtless much altered for the worse. The dreadful shock of separation took place in the night ; and he immediately despatched a letter to his friend, the Reverend Dr. Taylor, which, as Taylor told me, expressed grief in the strongest manner he had ever read ; so that it is much to be regretted it has not been preserved.<sup>1</sup> The letter was brought to Dr. Taylor, at his house in the Cloysters, Westminster, about three in the morning ; and as it signified an earnest desire to see him, he got up, and went to Johnson as soon as he was dressed, and found him in tears and in extreme agitation. After being a little while together, Johnson requested him to join with him in prayer. He then prayed extempore, as did Dr. Taylor ; and thus by means of that piety which was ever his primary object, his troubled mind was in some degree soothed and composed.

The next day he wrote as follows :

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<sup>1</sup> [In the *Gentleman's Magazine* for February 1794 (p. 100) was printed a letter pretending to be that written by Johnson on the death of his wife. But it is merely a transcript of the 41st number of the *Idler*. A fictitious date, March 17, 1751, O.S., was added by some person, previously to this paper's being sent to the publisher of that miscellany, to give a colour to this deception.—M.]

TO THE REV. DR. TAYLOR

'DEAR SIR,—Let me have your company and instruction. Do not live away from me. My distress is great.

'Pray desire Mrs. Taylor to inform me what mourning I should buy for my mother and Miss Porter, and bring a note in writing with you.

'Remember me in your prayers, for vain is the help of man.—I am, dear sir, etc.,

SAM. JOHNSON.

'*March 18, 1752.*'

That his sufferings upon the death of his wife were severe, beyond what are commonly endured, I have no doubt, from the information of many who were then about him, to none of whom I give more credit than to Mr. Francis Barber, his faithful negro servant,<sup>1</sup> who came into his family about a fortnight after the dismal event. These sufferings were aggravated by the melancholy inherent in his constitution; and although he probably was not oftener in the wrong than she was, in the little disagreements which sometimes troubled his married state, during which, he owned to me, that the gloomy irritability of his existence was more painful to him than ever, he might very naturally, after her death, be tenderly disposed to charge himself with slight omissions and offences,

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<sup>1</sup> Francis Barber was born in Jamaica, and was brought to England in 1750 by Colonel Bathurst, father of Johnson's very intimate friend, Dr. Bathurst. He was sent for some time to the Reverend Mr. Jackson's school at Barton, in Yorkshire. The Colonel, by his will, left him his freedom, and Dr. Bathurst was willing that he should enter into Johnson's service, in which he continued from 1752 till Johnson's death, with the exception of two intervals, in one of which, upon some difference with his master, he went and served an apothecary in Cheapside, but still visited Dr. Johnson occasionally; in another, he took a fancy to go to sea. Part of the time, indeed, he was, by the kindness of his master, at a school in Northamptonshire, that he might have the advantage of some learning. So early and so lasting a connection was there between Dr. Johnson and this humble friend.

the sense of which would give him much uneasiness.<sup>1</sup> Accordingly we find about a year after her decease that he thus addressed the Supreme Being: 'O Lord, who givest the grace of repentance, and hearest the prayers of the penitent, grant that by true contrition I may obtain forgiveness of all the sins committed, and of all duties neglected, in my union with the wife whom thou hast taken from me; for the neglect of joint devotion, patient exhortation, and mild instruction.'<sup>2</sup> The kindness of his heart, notwithstanding the impetuosity of his temper, is well known to his friends; and I cannot trace the smallest foundation for the following dark and uncharitable assertion by Sir John Hawkins: 'The apparition of his departed wife was altogether of the terrific kind, and hardly afforded him a hope that she was in a state of happiness.'<sup>3</sup> That he, in conformity with the opinion of many of the most able, learned, and pious Christians in all ages, supposed that there was a middle state after death, previous to the time at which departed souls are finally received to eternal felicity, appears, I think, unquestionably from his devotions:<sup>4</sup> 'And, O Lord, so far as it may be lawful in me, I commend to thy fatherly goodness *the soul of my departed wife*; beseeching thee to *grant her whatever is best in her present state, and finally to receive her to eternal happiness.*'<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [See his beautiful and affecting *Rambler*, No. 54.—M.]

<sup>2</sup> *Prayers and Meditations*.

<sup>3</sup> Hawkins's *Life of Johnson*, p. 216.

<sup>4</sup> [It does not appear that Johnson was fully persuaded that there was a middle state; his prayers being only *conditional*, i.e. if such a state existed.—M.]

[The Non-Jurors held it lawful to pray for the dead, and from them Johnson acquired his practice.—A. B.]

<sup>5</sup> *Prayers and Meditations*.

But this state has not been looked upon with horror, but only as less gracious.

He deposited the remains of Mrs. Johnson in the church of Bromley in Kent,<sup>1</sup> to which he was probably led by the residence of his friend Hawkesworth at that place. The funeral sermon which he composed for her, which was never preached, but having been given to Dr. Taylor, has been published since his death, is a performance of uncommon excellence, and full of rational and pious comfort to such as are depressed by that severe affliction which Johnson felt when he wrote it. When it is considered that it was written in such an agitation of mind, and in the short interval between her death and burial, it cannot be read without wonder.

From Mr. Francis Barber I have had the following authentic and artless account of the situation in which he found him recently after his wife's death: 'He was in great affliction. Mrs. Williams was then living in his house, which was in Gough Square. He was busy with the *Dictionary*. Mr. Shiels, and some others of the gentlemen who had formerly written for him, used

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<sup>1</sup> [A few months before his death, Johnson honoured her memory by the following epitaph, which was inscribed on her tombstone in the church of Bromley:

Hic conduntur reliquiæ  
ELIZABETHÆ  
Antiqua Jarvisiorum gente,  
Peatlingæ, apud Leicestrienses, ortæ  
Formosæ, cultæ, ingeniosæ, piæ;  
Uxoris, primis nuptiis, HENRICI PORTER,  
Secundis, SAMUELIS JOHNSON:  
Qui multum amatam, diuque defletam  
Hoc lapide contextit.  
Obiit Londini, Mense Mart.  
A.D. MDCCLII. —M.]

[On the actual tombstone the date of death is wrongly stated to be 1753.—A. B.]

to come about him. He had then little for himself, but frequently sent money to Mr. Shiels when in distress. The friends who visited him at that time were chiefly Dr. Bathurst,<sup>1</sup> and Mr. Diamond, an apothecary in Cork Street, Burlington Gardens, with whom he and Mrs. Williams generally dined every Sunday. There was a talk of his going to Iceland with him, which would probably have happened, had he lived. There was also Mr. Cave, Dr. Hawkesworth, Mr. Ryland, merchant on Tower Hill, Mrs. Masters, the poetess, who lived with Mr. Cave, Mrs. Carter, and sometimes Mrs. Macaulay; also Mrs. Gardiner, wife of a tallow-chandler on Snow Hill, not in the learned way, but a worthy good woman; Mr. (now Sir Joshua) Reynolds; Mr. Miller, Mr. Dodsley, Mr. Bouquet, Mr. Payne, of Paternoster Row, booksellers; Mr. Strahan, the printer; the Earl of Orrery, Lord Southwell, Mr. Garrick.'

Many are, no doubt, omitted in this catalogue of his friends, and, in particular, his humble friend Mr. Robert Levet, an obscure practiser in physic amongst the lower people, his fees being sometimes very small sums, sometimes whatever provisions his patients could afford him; but of such extensive practice in that way, that Mrs. Williams has told me, his walk was from Houndsditch to Marybone. It appears from Johnson's diary, that their acquaintance commenced

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Dr. Bathurst, though a physician of no inconsiderable merit, had not the good fortune to get much practice in London. He was, therefore, willing to accept of employment abroad, and, to the regret of all who knew him, fell a sacrifice to the destructive climate, in the expedition against the Havannah. Mr. Langton recollects the following passage in a letter from Dr. Johnson to Mr. Beauchamp: 'The Havannah is taken;—a conquest too dearly obtained; for Bathurst died before it.'

Vix Priamus tanti totaque Troja fuit.



about the year 1746 ; and such was Johnson's predilection for him, and fanciful estimation of his moderate abilities, that I have heard him say he should not be satisfied though attended by all the College of Physicians, unless he had Mr. Levet with him. Ever since I was acquainted with Dr. Johnson, and many years before, as I have been assured by those who knew him earlier, Mr. Levet had an apartment in his house, or his chambers, and waited upon him every morning, through the whole course of his late and tedious breakfast. He was of a strange, grotesque appearance, stiff and formal in his manner, and seldom said a word while any company was present.<sup>1</sup>

The circle of his friends, indeed, at this time, was extensive and varied, far beyond what has been generally imagined. To trace his acquaintance with each particular person, if it could be done, would be a task of which the labour would not be repaid by the advantage. But exceptions are to be made ; one of which must be a friend so eminent as Sir Joshua Reynolds, who was truly his *dulce decus*, and with whom he maintained an uninterrupted intimacy to the last hour of his life. When Johnson lived in Castle Street, Cavendish Square, he used frequently to visit two ladies who lived opposite to him, Miss Cotterells, daughters of Admiral Cotterell. Reynolds used also to visit there, and thus they met. Mr. Reynolds, as I have observed above, had, from the first reading of his

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<sup>1</sup> [A more particular account of this person may be found in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for February 1785. It originally appeared in the *St. James's Chronicle*, and, I believe, was written by the late George Steevens, Esq.—M.]

[<sup>1</sup> Levet, madam, is a brutal fellow, but I have a good regard for him, for his brutality is in his manners, not in his mind.—Madame D'Arblay's *Diary*, i. 115.—A. B.]

*Life of Savage*, conceived a very high admiration of Johnson's powers of writing. His conversation no less delighted him ; and he cultivated his acquaintance with the laudable zeal of one who was ambitious of general improvement. Sir Joshua, indeed, was lucky enough at their very first meeting to make a remark, which was so much above the commonplace style of conversation, that Johnson at once perceived that Reynolds had the habit of thinking for himself. The ladies were regretting the death of a friend, to whom they owed great obligations ; upon which Reynolds observed, ' You have, however, the comfort of being relieved from a burden of gratitude.' They were shocked a little at this alleviating suggestion, as too selfish ; but Johnson defended it in his clear and forcible manner, and was much pleased with the *mind*, the fair view of human nature which it exhibited, like some of the reflections of Rochefoucault. The consequence was, that he went home with Reynolds and supped with him.

Sir Joshua told me a pleasant characteristical anecdote of Johnson about the time of their first acquaintance. When they were one evening together at the Miss Cotterells', the then Duchess of Argyle and another lady of high rank came in. Johnson thinking that the Miss Cotterells were too much engrossed by them, and that he and his friend were neglected, as low company of whom they were somewhat ashamed, grew angry ; and resolving to shock their supposed pride by making their great visitors imagine that his friend and he were low indeed, he addressed himself in a loud tone to Mr. Reynolds, saying, ' How much do you think you and I could get in a week if

we were to *work as hard* as we could?'—as if they had been common mechanics.

His acquaintance with Bennet Langton, Esq., of Langton, in Lincolnshire, another much-valued friend, commenced soon after the conclusion of his *Rambler*; which that gentleman, then a youth, had read with so much admiration, that he came to London chiefly with a view of endeavouring to be introduced to its author. By a fortunate chance he happened to take lodgings in a house where Mr. Levet frequently visited; and having mentioned his wish to his landlady, she introduced him to Mr. Levet, who readily obtained Johnson's permission to bring Mr. Langton to him; as, indeed, Johnson, during the whole course of his life, had no shyness, real or affected, but was easy of access to all who were properly recommended, and even wished to see numbers at his *levee*, as his morning circle of company might, with strict propriety, be called. Mr. Langton was exceedingly surprised when the sage first appeared. He had not received the smallest intimation of his figure, dress, or manner. From perusing his writings, he fancied he should see a decent, well-dressed, in short, a remarkably decorous philosopher. Instead of which, down from his bed-chamber about noon came, as newly risen, a huge uncouth figure, with a little dark wig which scarcely covered his head, and his clothes hanging loose about him. But his conversation was so rich, so animated, and so forcible, and his religious and political notions so congenial with those in which Langton had been educated, that he conceived for him that veneration and attachment which he ever preserved. Johnson was not the less ready to love Mr. Langton, for his

being of a very ancient family ; for I have heard him say, with pleasure, ‘Langton, sir, has a grant of free warren from Henry the Second ; and Cardinal Stephen Langton, in King John’s reign, was of this family.’

Mr. Langton afterwards went to pursue his studies at Trinity College, Oxford, where he formed an acquaintance with his fellow-student, Mr. Topham Beauclerk ; who, though their opinions and modes of life were so different, that it seemed utterly improbable that they should at all agree, had so ardent a love of literature, so acute an understanding, such elegance of manners, and so well discerned the excellent qualities of Mr. Langton, a gentleman eminent not only for worth and learning, but for an inexhaustible fund of entertaining conversation, that they became intimate friends.

Johnson, soon after this acquaintance began, passed a considerable time at Oxford. He at first thought it strange that Langton should associate so much with one who had the character of being loose, both in his principles and practice : but, by degrees, he himself was fascinated. Mr. Beauclerk’s being of the St. Alban’s family, and having, in some particulars, a resemblance to Charles the Second, contributed in Johnson’s imagination to throw a lustre upon his other qualities ; and in a short time, the moral, pious Johnson, and the gay, dissipated Beauclerk, were companions. ‘What a coalition ! (said Garrick, when he heard of this) I shall have my old friend to bail out of the Round-house.’ But I can bear testimony that it was a very agreeable association. Beauclerk was too polite, and valued learning and wit too much, to offend Johnson by sallies of infidelity or licentious-

ness; and Johnson delighted in the good qualities of Beauclerk, and hoped to correct the evil. Innumerable were the scenes in which Johnson was amused by these young men. Beauclerk could take more liberty with him than anybody with whom I ever saw him; but, on the other hand, Beauclerk was not spared by his respectable companion, when reproof was proper. Beauclerk had such a propensity to satire, that at one time Johnson said to him, ‘You never open your mouth but with intention to give pain; and you have often given me pain, not from the power of what you said, but from seeing your intention.’ At another time applying to him, with a slight alteration, a line of Pope, he said,

“‘Thy love of folly, and thy scorn of fools——”

Everything thou dost shows the one, and everything thou say’st the other.’ At another time he said to him, ‘Thy body is all vice, and thy mind all virtue.’ Beauclerk not seeming to relish the compliment, Johnson said, ‘Nay, sir, Alexander the Great, marching in triumph into Babylon, could not have desired to have had more said to him.’

Johnson was some time with Beauclerk at his house at Windsor, where he was entertained with experiments in natural philosophy. One Sunday, when the weather was very fine, Beauclerk enticed him, insensibly, to saunter about all the morning. They went into a churchyard, in the time of divine service, and Johnson laid himself down at his ease upon one of the tombstones. ‘Now, sir (said Beauclerk), you are like Hogarth’s Idle Apprentice.’ When Johnson got his pension, Beauclerk said to him, in the humorous

phrase of Falstaff, 'I hope you'll now purge and live cleanly, like a gentleman.'

One night when Beauclerk and Langton had supped at a tavern in London, and sat till about three in the morning, it came into their heads to go and knock up Johnson, and see if they could prevail on him to join them in a ramble. They rapped violently at the doors of his chambers in the Temple, till at last he appeared in his shirt, with his little black wig on the top of his head instead of a nightcap, and a poker in his hand, imagining, probably, that some ruffians were coming to attack him. When he discovered who they were, and was told their errand, he smiled, and with great good humour agreed to their proposal: 'What, is it you, you dogs! I'll have a frisk with you.' He was soon dressed, and they sallied forth together into Covent Garden, where the green-grocers and fruiterers were beginning to arrange their hampers, just come in from the country. Johnson made some attempts to help them: but the honest gardeners stared so at his figure and manner, and odd interference, that he soon saw his services were not relished. They then repaired to one of the neighbouring taverns, and made a bowl of that liquor called *Bishop*, which Johnson had always liked; while in joyous contempt of sleep, from which he had been roused, he repeated the festive lines,

'Short, O short then be thy reign,  
And give us to the world again.'<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Mr. Langton has recollected, or Dr. Johnson repeated, the passage wrong. The lines are in Lord Lansdowne's 'Drinking Song to Sleep, and run thus:

'Short, very short be then thy reign.  
For I'm in haste to laugh and drink again.'

They did not stay long, but walked down to the Thames, took a boat and rowed to Billingsgate. Beauclerk and Johnson were so well pleased with their amusement, that they resolved to persevere in dissipation for the rest of the day : but Langton deserted them, being engaged to breakfast with some young ladies. Johnson scolded him for 'leaving his social friends, to go and sit with a set of wretched *un-idea'd* girls.' Garrick being told of this ramble, said to him smartly, 'I heard of your frolic t'other night. You'll be in the *Chronicle*.' Upon which Johnson afterwards observed, '*He* durst not do such a thing. His *wife* would not *let* him !'

He entered upon this year 1753 with his usual piety, as appears from the following prayer, which I transcribed from that part of his diary which he burnt a few days before his death :

'Jan. 1, 1753, N.S., which I shall use for the future.

'Almighty God, who has continued my life to this day, grant that, by the assistance of thy Holy Spirit, I may improve the time which thou shalt grant me, to my eternal salvation. Make me to remember, to thy glory, thy judgments and thy mercies. Make me to consider the loss of my wife, whom thou hast taken from me, that it may dispose me, by thy grace, to lead the residue of my life in thy fear. Grant this, O Lord, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

He now relieved the drudgery of his *Dictionary*, and the melancholy of his grief, by taking an active part in the composition of the *Adventurer*, in which he began to write April 10, marking his essays with the signature T, by which most of his papers in that collection are distinguished : those, however, which have that signature and also that of *Mysargyrus*, were not

written by him, but, as I suppose, by Dr. Bathurst. Indeed Johnson's energy of thought and richness of language are still more decisive marks than any signature. As a proof of this, my readers, I imagine, will not doubt that Number 39, on sleep, is his ; for it not only has the general texture and colour of his style, but the authors with whom he was peculiarly conversant are readily introduced in it in cursory allusion. The translation of a passage in Statius, quoted in that paper, and marked C. B., has been erroneously ascribed to Dr. Bathurst, whose Christian name was Richard. How much this amiable man contributed to the *Adventurer* cannot be known. Let me add that Hawkesworth's imitations of Johnson are sometimes so happy, that it is extremely difficult to distinguish them with certainty, from the compositions of his great archetype. Hawkesworth was his closest imitator, a circumstance of which that writer would once have been proud to be told ; though, when he had become elated by having risen into some degree of consequence, he, in a conversation with me, had the provoking effrontery to say he was not sensible of it.

Johnson was truly zealous for the success of the *Adventurer* ; and very soon after his engaging in it he wrote the following letter :

TO THE REV. DR. JOSEPH WARTON

'DEAR SIR,—I ought to have written to you before now, but I ought to do many things which I do not ; nor can I, indeed, claim any merit from this letter ; for being desired by the authors and proprietor of the *Adventurer* to look out for another hand, my thoughts necessarily fixed upon you, whose fund of literature will enable you to assist them, with very little interruption of your studies.



‘They desire you to engage to furnish one paper a month, at two guineas a paper, which you may very readily perform. We have considered that a paper should consist of pieces of imagination, pictures of life, and disquisitions of literature. The part which depends on the imagination is very well supplied, as you will find when you read the paper; for descriptions of life, there is now a treaty almost made with an authour and an authouress;<sup>1</sup> and the province of criticism and literature they are very desirous to assign to the commentator on Virgil.

‘I hope this proposal will not be rejected, and that the next post will bring us your compliance. I speak as one of the fraternity, though I have no part in the paper, beyond now and then a motto; but two of the writers are my particular friends, and I hope the pleasure of seeing a third united to them will not be denied to, dear sir, your most obedient and most humble servant,

SAM. JOHNSON.

‘March 8, 1753.’

The consequence of this letter was Dr. Warton’s enriching the collection with several admirable essays.

Johnson’s saying ‘I have no part in the paper beyond now and then a motto,’ may seem inconsistent with his being the author of the papers marked T. But he had, at this time, written only one number; and besides, even at any after period, he might have used the same expression, considering it as a point of honour not to own them; for Mrs. Williams told me that, ‘as he had *given* those essays to Dr. Bathurst, who sold them at two guineas each, he never would own them; nay, he used to say he did not *write* them: but the fact was, that he *dictated* them while Bathurst wrote.’ I read to him Mrs. Williams’s account; he smiled, and said nothing.

I am not quite satisfied with the casuistry by which

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<sup>1</sup> [It is not improbable that the ‘authour and authouress’ were Henry and his sister Sally Fielding.—M.]

the productions of one person are thus passed upon the world for the productions of another. I allow that not only knowledge, but powers and qualities of mind may be communicated ; but the actual effect of individual exertion never can be transferred, with truth, to any other than its own original cause. One person's child may be made the child of another person by adoption, as among the Romans, or by the ancient Jewish mode of a wife having children borne to her upon her knees, by her handmaid. But these were children in a different sense from that of nature. It was clearly understood that they were not of the blood of their nominal parents. So in literary children, an author may give the profits and fame of his composition to another man, but cannot make that other the real author. A Highland gentleman, a younger branch of a family, once consulted me if he could not validly purchase the chieftainship of his family from the chief, who was willing to sell it. I told him it was impossible for him to acquire by purchase a right to be a different person from what he really was ; for that the right of chieftainship attached to the blood of primogeniture, and, therefore, was incapable of being transferred. I added, that though Esau sold his birthright, or the advantages belonging to it, he still remained the first-born of his parents ; and that whatever agreement a chief might make with any of the clan, the Heralds' Office could not admit of the metamorphosis, or with any decency attest that the younger was the elder ; but I did not convince the worthy gentleman.

Johnson's papers in the *Adventurer* are very similar to those of the *Rambler* ; but being rather more varied in their subjects, and being mixed with essays by other



*S. Richardson*  
*Author of Clarissa.*



*Samuel Richardson*

writers,<sup>1</sup> upon topics more generally attractive than even the most elegant ethical discourses, the sale of the work, at first, was more extensive. Without meaning, however, to depreciate the *Adventurer*, I must observe, that as the value of the *Rambler* came, in the progress of time, to be better known, it grew upon the public estimation, and that its sale has far exceeded that of any other periodical papers since the reign of Queen Anne.

In one of the books of his diary I find the following entry :

‘Apr. 3, 1753. I began the second vol. of my *Dictionary*, room being left in the first for the Preface, Grammar, and History, none of them yet begun.

‘O God, who hast hitherto supported me, enable me to proceed in this labour, and in the whole task of my present state ; that when I shall render up, at the last day, an account of the talent committed to me, I may receive pardon, for the sake of Jesus Christ. Amen.’

He this year favoured Mrs. Lenox with a Dedication to the Earl of Orrery, of her *Shakespeare Illustrated*.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [Dr. Johnson lowered and somewhat disguised his style, in writing the *Adventurers*, in order that his papers might pass for those of Dr. Bathurst, to whom he consigned the profits. This was Hawkesworth's opinion.—BURNBY.]

<sup>2</sup> [Two of Johnson's letters, addressed to Samuel Richardson, author of *Clarissa*, etc., the former dated March 9, 1750-1, the other September 26, 1753, are preserved in Richardson's *Correspondence*, 8vo, 1804, vol. v. pp. 281-284. In the latter of these letters Johnson suggested to Richardson the propriety of making an Index to his three works : ‘but while I am writing (he adds), an objection arises ; such an index to the three would look like a preclusion of a fourth, to which I will never contribute ; for if I cannot benefit mankind I hope never to injure them.’ Richardson, however, adopted the hint ; for, in 1755, he published in octavo, *A Collection of the moral and instructive Sentiments, Maxims, Cautions, and Reflections, contained in the Histories of Pamela, Clarissa, and Sir Charles Grandison, digested under proper heads*.

It is remarkable, that both to this book, and to the first two volumes of *Clarissa*, is prefixed a Preface, *by a friend* ; the ‘friend,’ in this latter instance, was the celebrated Dr. Warburton.—M.]

In 1754 I can trace nothing published by him, except his numbers of the *Adventurer*, and 'The Life of Edward Cave,' in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for February. In biography there can be no question that he excelled, beyond all who have attempted that species of composition ; upon which, indeed, he set the highest value. To the minute selection of characteristical circumstances, for which the ancients were remarkable, he added a philosophical research, and the most perspicuous and energetic language. Cave was certainly a man of estimable qualities, and was eminently diligent and successful in his own business, which, doubtless, entitled him to respect. But he was peculiarly fortunate in being recorded by Johnson ; who, of the narrow life of a printer and publisher, without any digressions or adventitious circumstances, has made an interesting and agreeable narrative.

The *Dictionary*, we may believe, afforded Johnson full occupation this year. As it approached to its conclusion, he probably worked with redoubled vigour, as seamen increase their exertion and alacrity when they have a near prospect of their haven.

Lord Chesterfield, to whom Johnson had paid the high compliment of addressing to his lordship the Plan of his *Dictionary*, had behaved to him in such a manner as to excite his contempt and indignation. The world has been for many years amused with a story confidently told, and as confidently repeated with additional circumstances, that a sudden disgust was taken by Johnson upon occasion of his having been one day kept long in waiting in his lordship's antechamber, for which the reason assigned was, that he had company with him ; and that at last, when the door opened, out

walked Collie Cibber; and that Johnson was so violently provoked when he found for whom he had been so long excluded, that he went away in a passion, and never would return. I remember having mentioned this story to George Lord Lyttelton, who told me he was very intimate with Lord Chesterfield; and holding it as a well-known truth, defended Lord Chesterfield by saying that ‘Cibber, who had been introduced familiarly by the backstairs, had probably not been there above ten minutes.’ It may seem strange even to entertain a doubt concerning a story so long and so widely current, and thus implicitly adopted, if not sanctioned by the authority which I have mentioned; but Johnson himself assured me, that there was not the least foundation for it. He told me that there never was any particular incident which produced a quarrel between Lord Chesterfield and him; but that his lordship’s continued neglect was the reason why he resolved to have no connection with him. When the *Dictionary* was upon the eve of publication, Lord Chesterfield, who, it is said, had flattered himself with expectations that Johnson would dedicate the work to him, attempted, in a courtly manner, to soothe and insinuate himself with the sage, conscious as it should seem, of the cold indifference with which he had treated its learned author; and further attempted to conciliate him by writing two papers in the *World*, in recommendation of the work; and it must be confessed that they contain some studied compliments, so finely turned, that if there had been no previous offence, it is probable that Johnson would have been highly delighted. Praise, in general, was pleasing to him; but by praise from a man of rank

and elegant accomplishments, he was peculiarly gratified.

His lordship says :

‘I think the public in general, and the republic of letters in particular, are greatly obliged to Mr. Johnson for having undertaken and executed so great and desirable a work. Perfection is not to be expected from man ; but if we are to judge by the various works of Johnson already published, we have good reason to believe that he will bring this as near to perfection as any man could do. The Plan of it, which he published some years ago, seems to me to be a proof of it. Nothing can be more rationally imagined, or more accurately and elegantly expressed. I therefore recommend the previous perusal of it to all those who intend to buy the *Dictionary*, and who, I suppose, are all those who can afford it.

. . . . .

‘It must be owned that our language is at present in a state of anarchy, and hitherto, perhaps, it may not have been the worse for it. During our free and open trade, many words and expressions have been imported, adopted, and naturalised from other languages, which have greatly enriched our own. Let it still preserve what real strength and beauty it may have borrowed from others ; but let it not, like the Tarpeian maid, be overwhelmed and crushed by unnecessary ornaments. The time for discrimination seems to be now come. Toleration, adoption, and naturalisation, have run their lengths. Good order and authority are now necessary. But where shall we find them, and, at the same time, the obedience due to them ? We must have recourse to the old Roman expedient in times of confusion, and choose a dictator. Upon this principle I give my vote for Mr. Johnson to fill that great and arduous post. And I hereby declare, that I make a total surrender of all my rights and privileges in the English language as a free-born British subject, to the said Mr. Johnson, during the term of his dictatorship. Nay, more, I will not only obey him like an old Roman, as my dictator, but like a modern Roman I will implicitly believe in him as my Pope, and hold him to be infallible while in the chair, but no longer. More than this



he cannot well require; for I presume that obedience can never be expected when there is neither terror to enforce, nor interest to invite it.

‘But a Grammar, a Dictionary, and a History of our Language through its several stages, were still wanting at home, and importunately called for from abroad. Mr. Johnson’s labours will now, I dare say, very fully supply that want, and greatly contribute to the further spreading of our language in other countries. Learners were discouraged by finding no standard to resort to; and, consequently, thought it incapable of any. They will now be undeceived and encouraged.’

This courtly device failed of its effect. Johnson, who thought that ‘all was false and hollow,’ despised the honeyed words, and was even indignant that Lord Chesterfield should, for a moment, imagine that he could be the dupe of such an artifice. His expression to me concerning Lord Chesterfield upon this occasion was, ‘Sir, after making great professions, he had for many years taken no notice of me; but when my *Dictionary* was coming out, he fell a-scribbling in the *World* about it. Upon which I wrote him a letter expressed in civil terms, but such as might show him that I did not mind what he said or wrote, and that I had done with him.’

This is that celebrated letter of which so much has been said, and about which curiosity has been so long excited, without being gratified. I for many years solicited Johnson to favour me with a copy of it, that so excellent a composition might not be lost to posterity. He delayed from time to time to give it me;<sup>1</sup> till at last, in 1781, when we were on a visit at

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Johnson appeared to have had a remarkable delicacy with respect to the circulation of this letter: for Dr. Douglas, Bishop of Salisbury, informs me, that having many years ago pressed him to be

Mr. Dilly's, at Southill in Bedfordshire, he was pleased to dictate it to me from memory. He afterwards found among his papers a copy of it, which he had dictated to Mr. Baretti, with its title and corrections, in his own handwriting. This he gave to Mr. Langton; adding, that if it were to come into print, he wished it to be from that copy. By Mr. Langton's kindness, I am enabled to enrich my work with a perfect transcript of what the world has so eagerly desired to see :

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE THE EARL OF  
CHESTERFIELD

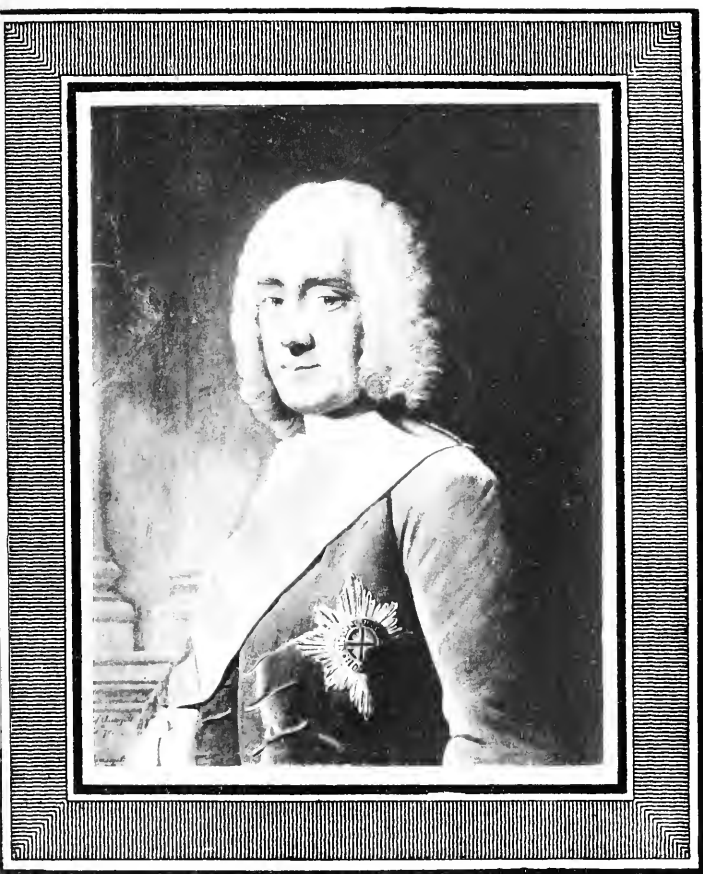
*February 7, 1755.*

'MY LORD,—I have been lately informed, by the proprietor of the *World*, that two papers, in which my *Dictionary* is recommended to the public, were written by your Lordship. To be so distinguished is an honour, which, being very little accustomed to favours from the great, I know not well how to receive, or in what terms to acknowledge.

'When, upon some slight encouragement, I first visited your Lordship, I was overpowered, like the rest of mankind, by the enchantment of your address, and could not forbear to wish that I might boast myself *Le vainqueur du vainqueur de la terre*;—that I might obtain that regard for which I saw the world contending; but I found my attendance so little encouraged that neither pride nor modesty would suffer me to continue it. When I had once addressed your Lordship in public I had exhausted all the art of pleasing which a retired and uncourtly scholar can possess. I had done all that I could; and no man is well pleased to have his all neglected, be it ever so little.

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allowed to read it to the second Lord Hardwicke, who was very desirous to hear it (promising at the same time, that no copy of it should be taken), Johnson seemed much pleased that it had attracted the attention of a nobleman of such a respectable character; but, after pausing some time, declined to comply with the request, saying, with a smile, 'No, sir; I have hurt the dog too much already'; or words to that purpose.



*Lord Chesterfield*



'Seven years, my Lord, have now passed since I waited in your outward rooms, or was repulsed from your door; during which time I have been pushing on my work through difficulties, of which it is useless to complain, and have brought it at last to the verge of publication, without one act of assistance,<sup>1</sup> one word of encouragement, or one smile of favour. Such treatment I did not expect, for I never had a Patron before.

'The shepherd in Virgil grew at last acquainted with Love, and found him a native of the rocks.

'Is not a Patron, my Lord, one who looks with unconcern on a man struggling for life in the water, and, when he has reached ground, encumbers him with help? The notice which you have been pleased to take of my labours, had it been early, had been kind; but it has been delayed till I am indifferent, and cannot enjoy it; till I am solitary, and cannot impart it;<sup>2</sup> till I am known, and do not want it. I hope it is no very cynical asperity not to confess obligations where no benefit has been received, or to be unwilling that the public should consider me as owing that to a Patron, which Providence has enabled me to do for myself.

'Having carried on my work thus far with so little obligation to any favourer of learning, I shall not be disappointed though I should conclude it, if less be possible, with less; for I have been long awakened from that dream of hope, in which I once boasted myself with so much exultation, my Lord,—Your Lordship's most humble, most obedient servant,

'SAM. JOHNSON.'<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The following note is subjoined by Mr. Langton:—'Dr. Johnson, when he gave me this copy of his letter, desired that I would annex to it his information to me, that whereas it is said in the letter that 'no assistance has been received,' he did once receive from Lord Chesterfield the sum of £10, but as that was so inconsiderable a sum, he thought the mention of it could not properly find a place in a letter of the kind that this was.'

<sup>2</sup> In this passage Dr. Johnson evidently alludes to the loss of his wife. We find the same tender recollection recurring to his mind upon innumerable occasions; and, perhaps, no man ever more forcibly felt the truth of the sentiment so elegantly expressed by my friend Mr. Malone, in his prologue to Mr. Jephson's tragedy of *Julia*:

'Vain—wealth, and fame, and fortune's fostering care,  
If no fond breast the splendid blessings share:  
And, each day's bustling pageantry once past,  
There, only there, our bliss is found at last.'

<sup>3</sup> Upon comparing this copy with that which Dr. Johnson dictated to me from recollection, the variations are found to be so slight, that

‘While this was the talk of the town (says Dr. Adams, in a letter to me), I happened to visit Dr. Warburton, who finding that I was acquainted with Johnson, desired me earnestly to carry his compliments to him, and to tell him, that he honoured him for his manly behaviour in rejecting these condescensions of Lord Chesterfield, and for resenting the treatment he had received from him with a proper spirit. Johnson was visibly pleased with this compliment, for he had always a high opinion of Warburton.’<sup>1</sup> Indeed, the force of mind which appeared in this letter, was congenial with that which Warburton himself amply possessed.

There is a curious minute circumstance which struck me, in comparing the various editions of Johnson’s *Imitations of Juvenal*. In the tenth *Satire* one of the couplets upon the vanity of wishes even for literary distinction stood thus :

‘Yet think what ills the scholar’s life assail,  
Toil, envy, want, the *garret*, and the jail.’

But after experiencing the uneasiness which Lord Chesterfield’s fallacious patronage made him feel, he dismissed the word *garret* from the sad group, and in all the subsequent editions the line stands

‘Toil, envy, want, the *Patron*, and the jail.’

this must be added to the many other proofs which he gave of the wonderful extent and accuracy of his memory. To gratify the curious in composition, I have deposited both the copies in the British Museum.

<sup>1</sup> Soon after Edwards’s *Canons of Criticism* came out, Johnson was dining at Tonson the Bookseller’s, with Hayman the Painter, and some more company. Hayman related to Sir Joshua Reynolds, that the conversation having turned upon Edwards’s book, the gentlemen praised it much, and Johnson allowed its merit. But when they went further, and appeared to put that author upon a level with Warburton, ‘Nay (said Johnson), he has given him some smart hits to be sure ; but there is no proportion between the two men ; they must not be named together. A fly, sir, may sting a stately horse and make him wince ; but one is but an insect, and the other is a horse still.

That Lord Chesterfield must have been mortified by the lofty contempt, and polite, yet keen, satire with which Johnson exhibited him to himself in this letter, it is impossible to doubt. He, however, with that glossy duplicity which was his constant study, affected to be quite unconcerned. Dr. Adams mentioned to Mr. Robert Dodsley that he was sorry Johnson had written his letter to Lord Chesterfield. Dodsley, with the true feelings of trade, said 'he was very sorry too ; for that he had a property in the *Dictionary*, to which his Lordship's patronage might have been of consequence.' He then told Dr. Adams that Lord Chesterfield had shown him the letter. 'I should have imagined (replied Dr. Adams) that Lord Chesterfield would have concealed it.' 'Poh ! (said Dodsley), do you think a letter from Johnson could hurt Lord Chesterfield ? Not at all, sir. It lay upon his table, where anybody might see it. He read it to me ; said, "This man has great powers," pointed out the severest passages, and observed how well they were expressed.' This air of indifference, which imposed upon the worthy Dodsley, was certainly nothing but a specimen of that dissimulation which Lord Chesterfield inculcated as one of the most essential lessons for the conduct of life. His Lordship endeavoured to justify himself to Dodsley from the charges brought against him by Johnson ; but we may judge of the flimsiness of his defence from his having excused his neglect of Johnson by saying, 'that he had heard he had changed his lodgings, and did not know where he lived' ; as if there could have been the smallest difficulty to inform himself of that circumstance by inquiring in the literary circle with which his Lord-

ship was well acquainted, and was, indeed, himself one of its ornaments.

Dr. Adams expostulated with Johnson, and suggested that his not being admitted when he called on him was probably not to be imputed to Lord Chesterfield; for his Lordship had declared to Dodsley, that 'he would have turned off the best servant he ever had if he had known that he denied him to a man who would have been always more than welcome'; and in confirmation of this, he insisted on Lord Chesterfield's general affability and easiness of access, especially to literary men. 'Sir (said Johnson), that is not Lord Chesterfield; he is the proudest man this day existing.' 'No (said Dr. Adams), there is one person, at least, as proud; I think, by your own account, you are the prouder man of the two.' 'But mine (replied Johnson instantly) was *defensive* pride.' This, as Dr. Adams well observed, was one of those happy turns for which he was so remarkably ready.

Johnson having now explicitly avowed his opinion of Lord Chesterfield, did not refrain from expressing himself concerning that nobleman with pointed freedom: 'This man (said he) I thought had been a Lord among wits; but, I find, he is only a wit among Lords.'<sup>1</sup> And when his Letters to his natural son were published, he observed, that 'they teach the morals of a whore, and the manners of a dancing-master.'<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [Johnson's character of Chesterfield seems to be imitated from—*inter doctos nobilissimus, inter nobiles doctissimus, inter utrosque optimus* (ex Apuleio. v. Erasm.—Dedication of Adagies to Lord Mountjoy); and from *ιδιώτης ἐν φιλοσόφοις, φιλόσοφος ἐν ιδιώταις*.—Proclus de Critica.—KEARNEY.]

<sup>2</sup> That collection of letters cannot be vindicated from the serious charge of encouraging, in some passages, one of the vices most destruc-



The character of a 'respectable Hottentot,' in Lord Chesterfield's letters, has been generally understood to be meant for Johnson, and I have no doubt that it was. But I remember when the *Literary Property* of those letters were contested in the Court of Session in Scotland, and Mr. Henry Dundas,<sup>1</sup> one of the counsel for the proprietors, read this character as an exhibition of Johnson, Sir David Dalrymple, Lord Hailes, one of the judges, maintained, with some warmth, that it was not intended as a portrait of Johnson, but of a late noble Lord, distinguished for abstruse science. I have heard Johnson himself talk of the character, and say that it was meant for George Lord Lyttelton, in which I could by no means agree; for his Lordship had nothing of that violence which is a conspicuous feature in the composition. Finding that my illustrious friend could bear to have it supposed that it might be meant for him, I said, laughingly, that there was one trait which unquestionably did not belong to him; 'he throws his meat anywhere but down his

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tive to the good order and comfort of society, which his Lordship represents as mere fashionable gallantry; and, in others, of inculcating the base practice of dissimulation, and recommending, with disproportionate anxiety, a perpetual attention to external elegance of manners. But it must at the same time be allowed that they contain many good precepts of conduct, and much genuine information upon life and manners, very happily expressed; and that there was considerable merit in paying so much attention to the improvement of one who was dependent upon his Lordship's protection; it has, probably, been exceeded in no instance by the most exemplary parent: and though I can by no means approve of confounding the distinction between lawful and illicit offspring, which is, in effect, insulting the civil establishment of our country, to look no higher; I cannot help thinking it laudable to be kindly attentive to those of whose existence we have, in any way, been the cause. Mr. Stanhope's character has been unjustly represented as diametrically opposite to what Lord Chesterfield wished him to be. He has been called dull, gross, and awkward: but I knew him at Dresden, when he was Envoy to that Court: and though he could not boast of the *graces*, he was, in truth, a sensible, civil, well-behaved man.—BOSWELL.

<sup>1</sup> Now [1792] one of his Majesty's principal Secretaries of State.

throat.' 'Sir (said he), Lord Chesterfield never saw me eat in his life.'<sup>1</sup>

On the 6th of March came out Lord Bolingbroke's works, published by Mr. David Mallet. The wild and pernicious ravings, under the name of 'Philosophy,' which were thus ushered into the world, gave great offence to all well-principled men. Johnson, hearing of their tendency, which nobody disputed, was roused with a just indignation, and pronounced this memorable sentence upon the noble author and his editor. 'Sir, he was a scoundrel and a coward: a scoundrel for charging a blunderbuss against religion and morality; a coward, because he had no resolution to fire it off himself, but left half-a-crown to a beggarly Scotchman to draw the trigger after his death!' Garrick, who, I can attest from my own knowledge, had his mind seasoned with pious reverence, and sincerely disapproved of the infidel writings of several whom in the course of his almost universal gay intercourse with men of eminence he treated with external civility, distinguished himself upon this occasion. Mr. Pelham having died on the very day on which Lord Bolingbroke's works came out, he wrote an elegant Ode on his death, beginning

'Let others hail the rising sun,  
I bow to that whose course is run';

in which is the following stanza:

'The same sad morn, to Church and State  
(So for our sins 'twas fix'd by fate),  
A double stroke was given;

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<sup>1</sup> [Dr. Birkbeck Hill (*Dr. Johnson, his Friends and his Critics*, p. 214) has, I think, completely made out that the 'respectable Hottentot' was not meant for Johnson, but for Lord Lyttelton.—A. B.]

Black as the whirlwinds of the North,  
 St. John's fell genius issued forth,  
 And Pelham fled to heaven.'

Johnson this year found an interval of leisure to make an excursion to Oxford, for the purpose of consulting the libraries there. Of this, and of many interesting circumstances concerning him, during a part of his life when he conversed but little with the world, I am enabled to give a particular account, by the liberal communications of the Reverend Mr. Thomas Warton, who obligingly furnished me with several of our common friend's letters, which he illustrated with notes. These I shall insert in their proper places.

#### TO THE REV. MR. THOMAS WARTON

'SIR,—It is but an ill return for the book with which you were pleased to favour me,<sup>1</sup> to have delayed my thanks for it till now. I am too apt to be negligent; but I can never deliberately show my disrespect to a man of your character: and I now pay you a very honest acknowledgment for the advancement of the literature of our native country. You have shown to all who shall hereafter attempt the study of our ancient authors the way to success; by directing them to the perusal of the books which those authors had read. Of this method Hughes,<sup>2</sup> and men much greater than Hughes, seem never to have thought. The reason why the authors, which are yet read, of the sixteenth century, are so little understood, is, that they are read alone; and no help is borrowed from those who lived with them or before them. Some part of this ignorance I hope to remove by my book,<sup>3</sup> which now draws towards its end; but which I cannot finish to my mind without visiting the libraries of Oxford, which I

<sup>1</sup> '*Observations on Spenser's Fairy Queen*, the first edition of which was now published.'

<sup>2</sup> 'Hughes published an edition of Spenser.'

<sup>3</sup> '*His Dictionary*.'

therefore hope to see in a fortnight.<sup>1</sup> I know not how long I shall stay, or where I shall lodge: but shall be sure to look for you at my arrival, and we shall easily settle the rest.—I am, dear sir, your most obedient, etc., SAM. JOHNSON.  
 ‘[*London,*] *July 16, 1754.*’

Of his conversation while at Oxford at this time Mr. Warton preserved and communicated to me the following memorial, which, though not written with all the care and attention which that learned and elegant writer bestowed on those compositions which he intended for the public eye, is so happily expressed in an easy style, that I should injure it by any alteration :

‘When Johnson came to Oxford in 1754, the long vacation was beginning, and most people were leaving the place. This was the first time of his being there after quitting the University. The next morning after his arrival he wished to see his old college, Pembroke. I went with him. He was highly pleased to find all the college servants which he had left there still remaining, particularly a very old butler; and expressed great satisfaction at being recognised by them, and conversed with them familiarly. He waited on the master, Dr. Radcliffe, who received him very coldly. Johnson at least expected that the master would order a copy of his *Dictionary*, now near publication; but the master did not choose to talk on the subject, never asked Johnson to dine, nor even to visit him, while he stayed at Oxford. After we had left the lodgings, Johnson said to me, “*There lives a man who lives by the revenues of literature, and will not move a finger to support it. If I come to live at Oxford, I shall take up my abode at Trinity.*” We then called on the Reverend Mr. Meeke, one of the Fellows, and of Johnson’s standing. Here was a most cordial greeting on both sides. On leaving him, Johnson said,

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<sup>1</sup> ‘He came to Oxford within a fortnight and stayed about five weeks. He lodged at a house called Kettel Hall, near Trinity College. But during this visit at Oxford he collected nothing in the libraries for his *Dictionary*.’



*Rev. Thomas Warton*



"I used to think Meeke had excellent parts when we were boys together at the college: but, alas!

'Lost in a convent's solitary gloom!'

I remember, at the classical lecture in the Hall, I could not bear Meeke's superiority, and I tried to sit as far from him as I could, that I might not hear him construe."

'As we were leaving the College, he said, "Here I translated Pope's *Messiah*. Which do you think is the best line in it?—My own favourite is—

Vallis aromaticas fundit Saronica nubes."

I told him I thought it a very sonorous hexameter. I did not tell him it was not in the Virgilian style. He much regretted that his *first* tutor was dead; for whom he seemed to retain the greatest regard. He said, "I once had been a whole morning sliding in Christ Church meadows, and missed his lecture in logic. After dinner he sent for me to his room. I expected a sharp rebuke for my idleness, and went with a beating heart. When we were seated, he told me he had sent for me to drink a glass of wine with him, and to tell me he was *not* angry with me for missing his lecture. This was, in fact, a most severe reprimand. Some more of the boys were then sent for, and we spent a very pleasant afternoon." Besides Mr. Meeke, there was only one other Fellow of Pembroke now resident: from both of whom Johnson received the greatest civilities during this visit, and they pressed him very much to have a room in the College.

'In the course of this visit (1754) Johnson and I walked three or four times to Ellsfield, a village beautifully situated about three miles from Oxford, to see Mr. Wise, Radclivian librarian, with whom Johnson was much pleased. At this place Mr. Wise had fitted up a house and gardens in a singular manner, but with great taste. Here was an excellent library; particularly, a valuable collection of books in northern literature, with which Johnson was often very busy. One day Mr. Wise read to us a dissertation which he was preparing for the press, entitled, *A History and Chronology of the Fabulous Ages*. Some old divinities of Thrace, related to the Titans, and called the Cabiri, made a very important part of the theory of this piece; and in conversation afterwards, Mr.

Wise talked much of his Cabiri. As we returned to Oxford in the evening I outwalked Johnson, and he cried out *Sufflamina*, a Latin word which came from his mouth with peculiar grace, and was as much as to say, "Put on your drag chain." Before we got home I again walked too fast for him; and he now cried out, "Why, you walk as if you were pursued by all the Cabiri in a body." In an evening we frequently took long walks from Oxford into the country, returning to supper. Once, in our way home, we viewed the ruins of the abbeys of Oseney and Rewley, near Oxford. After at least an hour's silence, Johnson said, "I viewed them with indignation!" We had then a long conversation on Gothic buildings; and in talking of the form of old halls, he said, "In these halls the fireplace was anciently always in the middle of the room, till the Whigs removed it on one side."—About this time there had been an execution of two or three criminals at Oxford on a Monday. Soon afterwards, one day at dinner, I was saying that Mr. Swinton, the chaplain of the jail, and also a frequent preacher before the University, a learned man, but often thoughtless and absent, preached the condemnation sermon on repentance, before the convicts, on the preceding day, Sunday; and that in the close he told his audience that he should give them the remainder of what he had to say on the subject the next Lord's Day. Upon which one of our company, a Doctor of Divinity, and a plain matter-of-fact man, by way of offering an apology for Mr. Swinton, gravely remarked that he had probably preached the same sermon before the University: "Yes, sir (said Johnson), but the University were not to be hanged next morning."

'I forgot to observe before that when he left Mr. Meeke (as I have told above), he added, "About the same time of life Meeke was left behind at Oxford to feed on a Fellowship, and I went to London to get my living: now, sir, see the difference of our literary characters!"'

The following letter was written by Dr. Johnson to Mr. Chambers, of Lincoln College, afterwards Sir Robert Chambers, one of the judges of India: <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Communicated by the Reverend Mr. Thomas Warton, who had the original



## TO MR. CHAMBERS, OF LINCOLN COLLEGE

'DEAR SIR,—The commission which I delayed to trouble you with at your departure, I am now obliged to send you ; and beg that you will be so kind as to carry it to Mr. Warton of Trinity, to whom I should have written immediately, but that I know not if he be yet come back to Oxford.

'In the Catalogue of MSS. of Gr. Brit. see vol. i. pag. 18 MSS. Bodl. MARTYRIUM XV. *martyrum sub Juliano, auctore Theophylacto.*

'It is desired that Mr. Warton will inquire, and send word, what will be the cost of transcribing this manuscript.

'Vol. ii. p. 32, Num. 1022, 58, COLL. NOV.—*Commentaria in Acta Apostol.—Comment. in Septem Epistolas Catholicas.*

'He is desired to tell what is the age of each of these manuscripts : and what it will cost to have a transcript of the two first pages of each.

'If Mr. Warton be not in Oxford, you may try if you can get it done by anybody else ; or stay till he comes, according to your own convenience. It is for an Italian *literato*.

'The answer is to be directed to his Excellency Mr. Zon, Venetian Resident, Soho Square.

'I hope, dear sir, that you do not regret the change of London for Oxford. Mr. Baretti is well, and Miss Williams ;<sup>1</sup> and we shall all be glad to hear from you, whenever you

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<sup>1</sup> 'I presume she was a relation of Mr. Zachariah Williams, who died in his eighty-third year, July 12, 1755. When Dr. Johnson was with me at Oxford, in 1755, he gave to the Bodleian Library a thin quarto of twenty-one pages, a work in Italian, with an English translation on the opposite page. The English title-page is this : *An Account of an Attempt to ascertain the Longitude at Sea, by an exact Variation of the Magnetical Needle, etc.* By Zachariah Williams. London, printed for Dodsley, 1755. The English translation, from the strongest internal marks, is unquestionably the work of Johnson. In a blank leaf Johnson has written the age and time of death of the author, Z. Williams, as I have said above. On another blank leaf is pasted a paragraph from a newspaper, of the death and character of Williams, which is plainly written by Johnson. He was very anxious about placing this book in the Bodleian : and, for fear of any omission or mistake, he entered in the great Catalogue the title-page of it with his own hand.'

[In this statement there is a slight mistake. The English account, which was written by Johnson, was the *original* : the Italian was a *translation*, done by Baretti.—M.]

shall be so kind as to write to, sir, your most humble servant,

SAM. JOHNSON.

‘Nov. 21, 1754.’

The degree of Master of Arts, which, it has been observed, could not be obtained for him at an early period of his life, was now considered as an honour of considerable importance, in order to grace the title-page of his *Dictionary*; and his character in the literary world being by this time deservedly high, his friends thought that, if proper exertions were made, the University of Oxford would pay him the compliment.

TO THE REV. MR. THOMAS WARTON

‘DEAR SIR,—I am extremely obliged to you and to Mr. Wise for the uncommon care which you have taken of my interest:<sup>1</sup> if you can accomplish your kind design, I shall certainly take me a little habitation among you.

‘The books which I have promised to Mr. Wise<sup>2</sup> I have not been able to procure; but I shall send him a Finnic Dictionary, the only copy, perhaps, in England, which was presented me by a learned Swede: but I keep it back, that it may make a set of my own books of the new edition, with which I shall accompany it, more welcome. You will assure him of my gratitude.

‘Poor dear Collins!<sup>3</sup>—Would a letter give him any pleasure? I have a mind to write.

<sup>1</sup> ‘In procuring him the degree of Master of Arts by diploma at Oxford.’

<sup>2</sup> ‘Lately Fellow of Trinity College, and at this time Radclivian librarian, at Oxford. He was a man of very considerable learning, and eminently skilled in Roman and Anglo-Saxon antiquities. He died in 1767.’

<sup>3</sup> ‘Collins (the poet) was at this time at Oxford, on a visit to Mr. Warton; but labouring under the most deplorable languor of body and dejection of mind.’

[In a letter to Dr. Joseph Warton, written some months before (March 8, 1754), Dr. Johnson thus speaks of Collins:

‘But how little can we venture to exult in any intellectual powers or literary attainments, when we consider the condition of poor Collins.

'I am glad of your hinderance in your Spenserian design,<sup>1</sup> yet I would not have it delayed. Three hours a day stolen from sleep and amusement will produce it. Let a Servitor<sup>2</sup> transcribe the quotations, and interleave them with references to save time. This will shorten the work and lessen the fatigue.

'Can I do anything to promoting the diploma? I would not be wanting to co-operate with your kindness; of which, whatever be the effect, I shall be, dear sir, your most obliged, etc.,

SAM JOHNSON.

'[*London*,] Nov. 28, 1754.'

#### TO THE SAME

'DEAR SIR,—I am extremely sensible of the favour done me, both by Mr. Wise and yourself. The book<sup>3</sup> cannot, I think, be printed in less than six weeks, nor probably so soon; and I will keep back the title-page for such an insertion as you seem to promise me. Be pleased to let me know what

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I knew him a few years ago full of hopes and full of projects, versed in many languages, high in fancy, and strong in retention. This busy and forcible mind is now under the government of those, who lately could not have been able to comprehend the least and most narrow of his designs. What do you hear of him? are there hopes of his recovery? or is he to pass the remainder of his life in misery and degradation? perhaps with complete consciousness of his calamity.'

In a subsequent letter to the same gentleman (Dec. 24, 1754), he thus feelingly alludes to their unfortunate friend:

'Poor dear Collins! Let me know whether you think it would give him pleasure if I should write to him. I have often been *near* his state, and therefore have it in great commiseration.'

Again: April 9, 1756:

'What becomes of poor dear Collins? I wrote him a letter which he never answered. I suppose writing is very troublesome to him. That man is no common loss. The moralists all talk of the uncertainty of fortune, and the transitoriness of beauty: but it is yet more dreadful to consider that the powers of the mind are equally liable to change, that understanding may make its appearance and depart, that it may blaze and expire.'

See *Biographical Memoirs of the late Reverend Dr. Joseph Warton*, by the Reverend John Wool, A.M., 4to, 1806.

Mr. Collins, who was the son of a hatter at Chichester, was born December 25, 1720, and was released from the dismal state here so pathetically described in 1756.—M.]

<sup>1</sup> 'Of publishing a volume of observations on the best of Spenser's works. It was hindered by my taking pupils in this College.'

<sup>2</sup> 'Young students of the lowest rank at Oxford are so called.'

<sup>3</sup> 'His *Dictionary*.'

money I shall send you, for bearing the expense of the affair; and I will take care that you may have it ready at your hand.

‘I had lately the favour of a letter from your brother, with some account of poor Collins, for whom I am much concerned. I have a notion, that by very great temperance, or more properly abstinence, he may yet recover.

‘There is an old English and Latin book of poems by Barclay, called *The Ship of Fools*; at the end of which are a number of *Eglogues*; so he writes it, from *Egloga*, which are probably the first in our language. If you cannot find the book, I will get Mr. Dodsley to send it you.

‘I shall be extremely glad to hear from you again, to know if the affair proceeds.<sup>1</sup> I have mentioned it to none of my friends, for fear of being laughed at for my disappointment.

‘You know poor Mr. Dodsley has lost his wife; I believe he is much affected. I hope he will not suffer so much as I yet suffer for the loss of mine.

Οἱ μοι· τί δ' οἱ μοι; θνητά τοι πεπόνθαμεν.<sup>2</sup>

I have ever since seemed to myself broken off from mankind; a kind of solitary wanderer in the wild of life, without any direction or fixed point of view: a gloomy gazer on the world to which I have little relation. Yet I would endeavour, by the help of you and your brother, to supply the want of closer union by friendship: and hope to have long the pleasure of being, dear sir, most affectionately yours, SAM. JOHNSON.

‘[*London*,] Dec. 21, 1754.’

In 1755 we behold him to great advantage; his degree of Master of Arts conferred upon him, his *Dictionary* published, his correspondence animated, his benevolence exercised.

#### TO THE REV. MR. THOMAS WARTON

‘DEAR SIR,—I wrote to you some weeks ago, but believe did not direct accurately, and therefore know not whether you

<sup>1</sup> ‘Of the degree at Oxford.’

<sup>2</sup> [This verse is preserved by Suidas, from the *Bellerophon* of Euripides.—CHARLES BURNES.]

‘Alas! but wherefore alas!—mortal men are born to sorrow.’—A. B.]

had my letter. I would, likewise, write to your brother, but know not where to find him. I now begin to see land, after having wandered, according to Mr. Warburton's phrase, in this vast sea of words. What reception I shall meet with on the shore I know not ; whether the sound of bells and acclamations of the people, which Ariosto talks of in his last Canto, or a general murmur of dislike, I know not : whether I shall find upon the coast a Calypso that will court, or a Polypheme that will resist. But if Polypheme comes, have at his eye. I hope, however, the critics will let me be at peace ; for though I do not much fear their skill and strength, I am a little afraid of myself, and would not willingly feel so much ill-will in my bosom as literary quarrels are apt to excite.

'Mr. Baretti is about a work for which he is in great want of Crescimbeni, which you may have again when you please.

'There is nothing considerable done or doing among us here.

We are not, perhaps, as innocent as villagers, but most of us seem to be as idle. I hope, however, you are busy ; and should be glad to know what you are doing.—I am, dearest sir, your humble servant,

SAM. JOHNSON.

'[*London,*] *Feb. 4, 1755.*'

#### TO THE SAME

'DEAR SIR,—I received your letter this day, with great sense of the favour that has been done me ;<sup>1</sup> for which I return my most sincere thanks : and entreat you to pay to Mr. Wise such returns as I ought to make for so much kindness so little deserved.

'I sent Mr. Wise the Lexicon, and afterwards wrote to him ; but know not whether he had either the book or letter. Be so good as to contrive to inquire.

'But why does my dear Mr. Warton tell me nothing of himself ? Where hangs the new volume ?<sup>2</sup> Can I help ? Let not the past labour be lost for want of a little more : but snatch what time you can from the Hall, and the pupils, and

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<sup>1</sup> 'His degree had now past, according to the usual form, the suffrages of the heads of colleges ; but was not yet finally granted by the University. It was carried without a single dissentient voice.'

<sup>2</sup> 'On Spenser.'

the coffee-house, and the parks, and complete your design.—  
I am, dear sir, etc.,

SAM. JOHNSON.

‘[London,] Feb. 4, 1755.’

TO THE REV. MR. THOMAS WARTON

‘DEAR SIR,—I had a letter last week from Mr. Wise, but have yet heard nothing from you, nor know in what state my affair<sup>1</sup> stands; of which I beg you to inform me, if you can, to-morrow, by the return of the post.

‘Mr. Wise sends me word that he has not had the Finnic Lexicon yet, which I sent some time ago; and if he has it not, you must inquire after it. However, do not let your letter stay for that.

‘Your brother, who is a better correspondent than you, and not much better, sends me word that your pupils keep you in college: but do they keep you from writing too? Let them, at least, give you time to write to, dear sir, your most affectionate, etc.,

SAM. JOHNSON.

‘[London,] Feb. 13, 1755.’

TO THE SAME

‘DEAR SIR,—Dr. King<sup>2</sup> was with me a few minutes before your letter; this, however, is the first instance in which your kind intentions to me have ever been frustrated.<sup>3</sup> I have now the full effect of your care and benevolence; and am far from thinking it a slight honour, or a small advantage; since it will put the enjoyment of your conversation more frequently in the power of, dear sir, your most obliged and affectionate,

‘SAM. JOHNSON.

‘P.S.—I have enclosed a letter to the Vice-Chancellor,<sup>4</sup> which you will read; and if you like it, seal and give him.

‘[London,] Feb. 1755.’

<sup>1</sup> ‘Of the degree.’

<sup>2</sup> ‘Principal of Saint Mary Hall at Oxford. He brought with him the diploma from Oxford.’

<sup>3</sup> ‘I suppose Johnson means that my *kind intention* of being the *first* to give him the good news of the degree being granted was *frustrated*, because Dr. King brought it before my intelligence arrived.’

<sup>4</sup> ‘Dr. Huddesford, President of Trinity College’

As the public will doubtless be pleased to see the whole progress of this well-earned academical honour, I shall insert the Chancellor of Oxford's letter to the University,<sup>1</sup> the diploma, and Johnson's letter of thanks to the Vice-Chancellor.

TO THE REVEREND DR. HUDDSFORD, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Oxford ; to be communicated to the Heads of Houses, and proposed in Convocation.

'MR. VICE-CHANCELLOR AND GENTLEMEN,—Mr. Samuel Johnson, who was formerly of Pembroke College, having very eminently distinguished himself by the publication of a series of essays, excellently calculated to form the manners of the people, and in which the cause of religion and morality is everywhere maintained by the strongest powers of argument and language ; and who shortly intends to publish a Dictionary of the English tongue formed on a new plan, and executed with the greatest labour and judgment ; I persuade myself that I shall act agreeable to the sentiments of the whole University in desiring that it may be proposed in convocation to confer on him the degree of Master of Arts by diploma, to which I readily give my consent ; and am, Mr. Vice-Chancellor and Gentlemen, your affectionate friend and servant,

'ARRAN.

'Grosvenor Street, Feb. 4, 1755.'

Term. Sett.

Hilarii. 'DIPLOMA MAGISTRI JOHNSON  
1755.

'CANCELLARIUS, Magistri, et Scholares Universitatis Oxoniensis omnibus ad quos hoc præsens scriptum pervenerit, salutem in Domino sempiternam.

'Cum eum in finem gradus academici a majoribus nostris instituti fuerint, ut viri ingenio et doctrina præstantes titulis quoque præter cæteros insignirentur ; cumque vir doctissimus

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<sup>1</sup> Extracted from the Convocation Register, Oxford.

Samuel Johnson e Collegio Pembrochiensi, scriptis suis popularium mores informantibus dudum literato orbi innotuerit; quin et linguae patriae tum ornandae tum stabiliendae (Lexicon scilicet Anglicanum summo studio, summo a se judicio congestum propediem editurus) etiam nunc utilissimam impendat operam; Nos igitur Cancellarius, Magistri, et Scholares antedicti, ne virum de literis humanioribus optime meritum diutius inhonoratum prætereamus, in solenni Convocatione Doctorum, Magistrorum, Regentium, et non Regentium, decimo die Mensis Februarii Anno Domini Millesimo Septingentesimo Quinquagesimo quinto habita, præfatum virum Samuelem Johnson (conspirantibus omnium suffragiis) Magistrum in Artibus renunciavimus et constituimus; eumque, virtute præsentis diplomatis, singulis juribus, privilegiis et honoribus ad istum gradum quaque pertinentibus frui et quadere jussimus.

‘In cujus rei testimonium sigillum Universitatis Oxoniensis præsentibus apponi fecimus.

‘Datum in Domo nostrae Convocationis die 20<sup>o</sup> Mensis Feb. Anno Dom. prædicto.

‘Diploma supra scriptum per Registrarium lectum erat, et ex decreto venerabilis Domus communi Universitatis sigillo munitum.’<sup>1</sup>

‘Londini, 4to. Cal. Mart. 1755.

‘VIRO REVERENDO . . . HUDDSFORD, S.T.P. UNIVERSITATIS OXONIENSIS VICE-CANCELLARIO DIGNISSIMO, S.P.D.

‘SAM. JOHNSON.’<sup>2</sup>

‘INGRATUS plane et tibi et mihi videar, nisi quanto me gaudio affecerint, quos nuper mihi honores (te, credo, auctore), decrevit Senatus Academicus, literarum, quo tamen nihil levius, officio significem: ingratus etiam, nisi comitatem, qua vir eximius<sup>3</sup> mihi vestri testimonium amoris in manus tradidit

<sup>1</sup> The original is in my possession.

<sup>2</sup> [The superscription of this letter was not quite correct in the former editions. It is here given from Dr. Johnson's original letter, now before me.—M.]

<sup>3</sup> We may conceive what a high gratification it must have been to Johnson to receive his diploma from the hands of the great Dr. King, whose principles were so congenial with his own.



agnoscam et laudem. Si quid est, unde rei tam gratæ accedat gratia, hoc ipso magis mihi placet, quod eo tempore in ordines Academicos denuo cooptatus sim, quo tuam imminuere auctoritatem, famamque Oxonii lædere, omnibus modis conantur homines vafri, nec tamen acuti: quibus ego, prout viro umbratico lienit, semper restiti, semper restiturus. Qui enim, inter has rerum procellas, vel tibi vel Academix defuerit, illum virtuti et literis, sibi que et posteris, defuturum existimo. Vale.'

## TO THE REV. MR. THOMAS WARTON

'DEAR SIR,—After I received my diploma, I wrote you a letter of thanks, with a letter to the Vice-Chancellor, and sent another to Mr. Wise: but have heard from nobody since, and begin to think myself forgotten. It is true, I sent you a double letter, and you may fear an expensive correspondent; but I would have taken it kindly, if you had returned it treble: and what is a double letter to a *petty king*, that having *fellowship and fines*, can sleep without a *Modus in his head*?<sup>1</sup>

'Dear Mr. Warton, let me hear from you, and tell me something, I care not what, so I hear it but from you. Something, I will tell you:—I hope to see my *Dictionary* bound and lettered, next week;—*vastâ mole superbus*. And I have a great mind to come to Oxford at Easter; but you will not invite me. Shall I come uninvited, or stay here where nobody perhaps would miss me if I went? A hard choice! But such is the world to, dear sir, yours, etc.

'SAM. JOHNSON.

'[London,] March 20, 1755.'

## TO THE SAME

'DEAR SIR,—Though not to write, when a man can write so well, is an offence sufficiently heinous, yet I shall pass it by. I am very glad that the Vice-Chancellor was pleased with my note. I shall impatiently expect you at London, that we may consider what to do next. I intend in the winter to open a *Bibliothèque*, and remember, that you are to subscribe a sheet

<sup>1</sup> 'The words in italics are allusions to passages in Mr. Warton's poem, called "The Progress of Discontent," now lately published.'

a year : let us try, likewise, if we cannot persuade your brother to subscribe another. My book is now coming *in luminis or as*. What will be its fate I know not, nor think much, because thinking is to no purpose. It must stand the censure of the *great vulgar and the small*; of those that understand it, and that understand it not. But in all this, I suffer not alone; every writer has the same difficulties, and perhaps, every writer talks of them more than he thinks.

‘You will be pleased to make my compliments to all my friends; and be so kind, at every idle hour, as to remember, dear sir, yours, etc.

SAM. JOHNSON.

‘[*London,*] *March 25, 1755.*’

Dr. Adams told me, that this scheme of a *Bibliothèque* was a serious one; for upon his visiting him one day, he found his parlour floor covered with parcels of foreign and English literary journals, and he told Dr. Adams he meant to undertake a Review. ‘How, sir (said Dr. Adams), can you think of doing it alone? All branches of knowledge must be considered in it. Do you know Mathematics? Do you know Natural History?’ Johnson answered, ‘Why, sir, I must do as well as I can. My chief purpose is to give my countrymen a view of what is doing in literature upon the continent; and I shall have, in a good measure, the choice of my subject, for I shall select such books as I best understand.’ Dr. Adams suggested, that as Dr. Maty had just then finished his *Bibliothèque Britannique*, which was a well-executed work, giving foreigners an account of British publications, he might with great advantage assume him as an assistant. ‘He (said Johnson), the little black dog! I’d throw him into the Thames.’ The scheme, however, was dropped.

In one of his little memorandum books I find the following hints for his intended Review or Literary

Journal : ‘ *The Annals of Literature, foreign as well as domestic.* Imitate Le Clerk, Bayle, Barbeyrac. Infelicity of Journals in England. Works of the learned. We cannot take in all. Sometimes copy from foreign Journalists. Always tell.’

TO DR. BIRCH

March 29, 1755.

‘SIR,—I have sent some parts of my *Dictionary*, such as were at hand, for your inspection. The favour which I beg is, that if you do not like them, you will say nothing.—I am, sir, your most affectionate humble servant,

‘SAM. JOHNSON.’

TO MR. SAMUEL JOHNSON

Norfolk Street, April 23, 1755.

‘SIR,—The part of your *Dictionary* which you have favoured me with the sight of, has given me such an idea of the whole, that I most sincerely congratulate the public upon the acquisition of a work long wanted, and now executed with an industry, accuracy, and judgment, equal to the importance of the subject. You might, perhaps, have chosen one in which your genius would have appeared to more advantage, but you could not have fixed upon any other in which your labours would have done such substantial service to the present age and to posterity. I am glad that your health has supported the application necessary to the performance of so vast a task; and can undertake to promise you as one (though perhaps the only) reward of it, the approbation and thanks of every well-wisher to the honour of the English language. I am, with the greatest regard, sir, your most faithful, and most affectionate humble servant,

THO. BIRCH.’

Mr. Charles Burney, who has since distinguished himself so much in the science of Music, and obtained a Doctor’s degree from the University of Oxford, had been driven from the capital by bad health, and was

now residing at Lynne Regis in Norfolk. He had been so much delighted with Johnson's *Rambler*, and the Plan of his *Dictionary*, that when the great work was announced in the newspapers as nearly finished, he wrote to Dr. Johnson, begging to be informed when and in what manner his *Dictionary* would be published ; entreating, if it should be by subscription, or he should have any books at his own disposal, to be favoured with six copies for himself and friends.

In answer to this application, Dr. Johnson wrote the following letter, of which (to use Dr. Burney's own words), ' if it be remembered that it was written to an obscure young man, who at this time had not much distinguished himself even in his own profession, but whose name could never have reached the author of the *Rambler*, the politeness and urbanity may be opposed to some of the stories which have been lately circulated of Dr. Johnson's natural rudeness and ferocity ' :

TO MR. BURNEY, IN LYNNE REGIS, NORFOLK

' SIR,—If you imagine that by delaying my answer I intended to show any neglect of the notice with which you have favoured me, you will neither think justly of yourself nor of me. Your civilities were offered with too much elegance not to engage attention ; and I have too much pleasure in pleasing men like you, not to feel very sensibly the distinction which you have bestowed upon me.

' Few consequences of my endeavours to please or to benefit mankind have delighted me more than your friendship thus voluntarily offered, which now I have it I hope to keep, because I hope to continue to deserve it.

' I have no Dictionaries to dispose of for myself, but shall be glad to have you direct your friends to Mr. Dodsley, because it was by his recommendation that I was employed in the work.

‘When you have leisure to think again upon me let me be favoured with another letter; and another yet, when you have looked into my *Dictionary*. If you find faults, I shall endeavour to mend them; if you find none, I shall think you blinded by kind partiality: but to have made you partial in his favour, will very much gratify the ambition of, sir, your most obliged and most humble servant,

SAM. JOHNSON.

*Gough Square, Fleet Street,*

*‘April 8, 1755.’*

Mr. Andrew Millar, bookseller in the Strand, took the principal charge of conducting the publication of Johnson’s *Dictionary*; and as the patience of the proprietors was repeatedly tried and almost exhausted by their expecting that the work would be completed within the time which Johnson had sanguinely supposed, the learned author was often goaded to dispatch, more especially as he had received all the copy-money, by different drafts, a considerable time before he had finished his task. When the messenger who carried the last sheet to Millar returned, Johnson asked him, ‘Well, what did he say?’—‘Sir’ (answered the messenger), ‘he said, Thank God I have done with him.’—‘I am glad’ (replied Johnson with a smile) ‘that he thanks God for anything.’<sup>1</sup> It is remarkable, that those with whom Johnson chiefly contracted for his literary labours were Scotchmen, Mr. Millar and Mr. Strahan. Millar, though himself no great judge of literature, had good sense enough to have for his friends very able men to give him their opinion and advice in the purchase of copyright; the consequence

<sup>1</sup> Sir John Hawkins, p. 341, inserts two notes as having passed formally between Andrew Millar and Johnson, to the above effect. I am assured this was not the case. In the way of incidental remark it was a pleasant play of raillery. To have deliberately written notes in such terms would have been morose.

of which was his acquiring a very large fortune, with great liberality. Johnson said of him, 'I respect Millar, sir; he has raised the price of literature.' The same praise may be justly given to Panckoucke, the eminent bookseller of Paris. Mr. Strahan's liberality, judgment, and success, are well known.

TO BENNET LANGTON, ESQ., AT LANGTON, NEAR SPILSBY,  
LINCOLNSHIRE

'SIR,—It has been long observed, that men do not suspect faults which they do not commit; your own elegance of manners, and punctuality of complaisance, did not suffer you to impute to me that negligence of which I was guilty, and which I have not since atoned. I received both your letters, and received them with pleasure proportionate to the esteem which so short an acquaintance strongly impressed, and which I hope to confirm by nearer knowledge, though I am afraid that gratification will be for a time withheld.

'I have, indeed, published my book,<sup>1</sup> of which I beg to know your father's judgment, and yours; and I have now stayed long enough to watch its progress in the world. It has, you see, no patrons, and, I think, has yet had no opponents, except the critics of the coffee-house, whose outcries are soon dispersed into the air, and are thought on no more: from this, therefore, I am at liberty, and think of taking the opportunity of this interval to make an excursion, and why not then into Lincolnshire? or, to mention a stronger attraction, why not to dear Mr. Langton? I will give the true reason, which I know you will approve: I have a mother more than eighty years old, who has counted the days to the publication of my book, in hopes of seeing me; and to her, if I can disengage myself here, I resolve to go.

'As I know, dear sir, that to delay my visit for a reason like this will not deprive me of your esteem, I beg it may not lessen your kindness. I have very seldom received an offer of friendship which I so earnestly desire to cultivate and

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<sup>1</sup> 'His *Dictionary*.'

mature. I shall rejoice to hear from you till I can see you, and will see you as soon as I can; for when the duty that calls me to Lichfield is discharged, my inclination will carry me to Langton. I shall delight to hear the ocean roar, or see the stars twinkle, in the company of men to whom Nature does not spread her volumes or utter her voice in vain.

‘Do not, dear sir, make the slowness of this letter a precedent for delay, or imagine that I approved the incivility that I have committed; for I have known you enough to love you, and sincerely to wish a farther knowledge; and I assure you, once more, that to live in a house that contains such a father, and such a son, will be accounted a very uncommon degree of pleasure by, dear sir, your most obliged and most humble servant,

SAM. JOHNSON.

‘May 6, 1755.’

#### TO THE REV. MR. THOMAS WARTON

‘DEAR SIR,—I am grieved that you should think me capable of neglecting your letters, and beg you will never admit any such suspicion again. I purpose to come down next week, if you shall be there; or any other week that shall be more agreeable to you. Therefore let me know. I can stay this visit but a week, but intend to make preparations for a longer stay next time; being resolved not to lose sight of the University. How goes Apollonius?<sup>1</sup> Don’t let him be forgotten. Some things of this kind must be done to keep us up. Pay my compliments to Mr. Wise, and all my other friends. I think to come to Kettel Hall.<sup>2</sup>—I am, sir, your most affectionate, etc.,

SAM. JOHNSON.

‘[London,] May 13, 1755.’

#### TO THE SAME

‘DEAR SIR,—It is strange how many things will happen to intercept every pleasure, though it [be] only that of two

<sup>1</sup> ‘A translation of Apollonius Rhodius was now intended by Mr. Warton.’

<sup>2</sup> [Kettel Hall is an ancient tenement, built about the year 1615 by Dr. Ralph Kettel, President of Trinity College, for the accommodation of Commoners of that Society. It adjoins the College; and was a few years ago converted into a private house.—M.]

friends meeting together. I have promised myself every day to inform you when you might expect me at Oxford, and have not been able to fix a time. The time, however, is, I think, at last come; and I promise myself to repose in Kettel Hall one of the first nights of the next week. I am afraid my stay with you cannot be long; but what is the inference? We must endeavour to make it cheerful. I wish your brother could meet us, that we might go and drink tea with Mr. Wise in a body. I hope he will be at Oxford, or at his nest of British and Saxon antiquities.<sup>1</sup> I shall expect to see Spenser finished, and many other things begun. Dodsley is gone to visit the Dutch. The *Dictionary* sells well. The rest of the world goes on as it did.—Dear sir, your most affectionate, etc.,

‘SAM. JOHNSON.

‘[*London*,] *June 10, 1755.*’

TO THE REV. MR. THOMAS WARTON

‘DEAR SIR,—To talk of coming to you, and not yet come, has an air of trifling which I would not willingly have among you; and which, I believe, you will not willingly impute to me, when I have told you that, since my promise, two of our partners<sup>2</sup> are dead, and that I was solicited to suspend my excursion till we could recover from our confusion.

‘I have not laid aside my purpose; for every day makes me more impatient of staying from you. But death, you know, hears not supplications, nor pays any regard to the convenience of mortals. I hope now to see you next week; but next week is but another name for to-morrow, which has been noted for promising and deceiving.—I am, etc.,

‘SAM. JOHNSON.

‘[*London*,] *June 24, 1755.*’

TO THE SAME

‘DEAR SIR,—I told you that among the manuscripts are some things of Sir Thomas More. I beg you to pass an hour in looking on them, and procure a transcript of the ten or twenty first lines of each, to be compared with what I have;

<sup>1</sup> ‘At Ellsfield, a village three miles from Oxford.’

<sup>2</sup> ‘Booksellers concerned in his *Dictionary*.’



that I may know whether they are yet published. The manuscripts are these :

‘Catalogue of Bodl. ms. page 122, f. 3, Sir Thomas More.

‘1. Fall of angels. 2. Creation and fall of mankind. 3. Determination of the Trinity for the rescue of mankind. 4. Five lectures of our Saviour’s passion. 5. Of the institution of the sacrament, three lectures. 6. How to receive the blessed body of our Lord sacramentally. 7. Neomenia, the new moon. 8. *De tristitia, tædio, pavore, et oratione Christi ante captionem ejus.*

‘Catalogue, page 154. Life of Sir Thomas More. *Qu.* Whether Roper’s? Page 363. *De resignatione Magni Sigilli in manus Regis per D. Thomam Morum.* Page 364. *Mori Defensio Morie.*

‘If you procure the young gentleman in the library to write out what you think fit to be written, I will send to Mr. Prince the bookseller to pay him what you think proper.

‘Be pleased to make my compliments to Mr. Wise, and all my friends.—I am, sir, your affectionate, etc.,

‘SAM. JOHNSON.

‘[*London,*] Aug. 7, 1755.’

The *Dictionary*, with a Grammar and History of the English Language, being now at length published, in two volumes folio, the world contemplated with wonder so stupendous a work achieved by one man, while other countries had thought such undertakings fit only for whole academies. Vast as his powers were, I cannot but think that his imagination deceived him when he supposed that by constant application he might have performed the task in three years. Let the Preface be attentively perused, in which is given, in a clear, strong, and glowing style, a comprehensive yet particular view of what he had done ; and it will be evident that the time he employed upon it was comparatively short. I am unwilling to swell my book with long quotations from what is in every-

body's hands, and I believe there are few prose compositions in the English language that are read with more delight, or are more impressed upon the memory, than that preliminary discourse. One of its excellences has always struck me with peculiar admiration; I mean the perspicuity with which he has expressed abstract scientific notions. As an instance of this I shall quote the following sentence: 'When the radical idea branches out into parallel ramifications, how can a consecutive series be formed of senses in their own nature collateral?' We have here an example of what has been often said, and I believe with justice, that there is for every thought a certain nice adaptation of words which none other could equal, and which when a man has been so fortunate as to hit, he has attained, in that particular case, the perfection of language.

The extensive reading which was absolutely necessary for the accumulation of authorities, and which alone may account for Johnson's retentive mind being enriched with a very large and various store of knowledge and imagery, must have occupied several years. The preface furnishes an eminent instance of a double talent, of which Johnson was fully conscious. Sir Joshua Reynolds heard him say, 'There are two things which I am confident I can do very well: one is an introduction to any literary work, stating what it is to contain, and how it should be executed in the most perfect manner; the other is a conclusion, showing from various causes why the execution has not been equal to what the author promised to himself and to the public.'

How should puny scribblers be abashed and dis-

appointed, when they find him displaying a perfect theory of lexicographical excellence, yet at the same time candidly and modestly allowing that he 'had not satisfied his own expectations.' Here was a fair occasion for the exercise of Johnson's modesty, when he was called upon to compare his own arduous performance, not with those of other individuals (in which case his inflexible regard to truth would have been violated had he affected diffidence), but with speculative perfection; as he, who can outstrip all his competitors in the race, may yet be sensible of his deficiency when he runs against time. Well might he say, that 'the English Dictionary was written with little assistance of the learned'; for he told me, that the only aid which he received was a paper containing twenty etymologies, sent to him by a person then unknown, who he was afterwards informed was Dr. Pearce, Bishop of Rochester. The etymologies, though they exhibit learning and judgment, are not, I think, entitled to the first praise amongst the various parts of this immense work. The definitions have always appeared to me such astonishing proofs of acuteness of intellect and precision of language, as indicate a genius of the highest rank. This it is which marks the superior excellence of Johnson's *Dictionary* over others equally or even more voluminous, and must have made it a work of much greater mental labour than mere Lexicons, or *Word-Books*, as the Dutch call them. They, who will make the experiment of trying how they can define a few words of whatever nature, will soon be satisfied of the unquestionable justice of this observation, which I can assure my readers is founded upon much study,

and upon communication with more minds than my own.

A few of his definitions must be admitted to be erroneous. Thus, *Windward* and *Leeward*, though directly of opposite meaning, are defined identically the same way;<sup>1</sup> as to which inconsiderable specks it is enough to observe, that his Preface announces that he was aware there might be many such in so immense a work; nor was he at all disconcerted when an instance was pointed out to him. A lady once asked him how he came to define *Pastern* the *knee* of a horse: instead of making an elaborate defence, as she expected, he at once answered, 'Ignorance, madam, pure ignorance.' His definition of *Network* has often been quoted with sportive malignity, as obscuring a thing in itself very plain. But to these frivolous censures no other answer is necessary than that with which we are furnished by his own Preface :

'To explain, requires the use of terms less abstruse than that which is to be explained, and such terms cannot always be found. For as nothing can be proved but by supposing something intuitively known, and evident without proof, so nothing can be defined but by the use of words too plain to admit of definition. Sometimes easier words are changed into harder; as, *burial*, into *sepulture* or *interment*; *dry*, into *desiccative*; *dryness*, into *siccity*, or *aridity*; *fit*, into *paroxysm*; for the *easiest* word, whatever it be, can never be translated into one more easy.'

His introducing his own opinions, and even prejudices, under general definitions of words, while at the

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<sup>1</sup> [He owns in his Preface the deficiency of the technical part of his work; and he said, he should be much obliged to me for definitions of musical terms for his next edition, which he did not live to superintend. —BURNEY.]

same time the original meaning of the words is not explained, as his *Tory*, *Whig*, *Pension*, *Oats*, *Excise*,<sup>1</sup> and a few more, cannot be fully defended, and must be placed to the account of capricious and humorous indulgence. Talking to me upon this subject when we were at Ashbourne in 1777, he mentioned a still stronger instance of the predominance of his private feelings in the composition of this work, than any now to be found in it. 'You know, sir, Lord Gower forsook the old Jacobite interest. When I came to the word *Renegado*, after telling that it meant "one who deserts to the enemy, a revolter," I added, *Sometimes we say a GOWER*. Thus it went to the press: but the printer had more wit than I, and struck it out.'

Let it, however, be remembered, that this indulgence does not display itself only in sarcasm towards others, but sometimes in playful allusion to the notions commonly entertained of his own laborious task. Thus: '*Grub Street*, the name of a street in London, much inhabited by writers of small histories, *dictionaries*,

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<sup>1</sup> He thus defines Excise: 'A hateful tax levied upon commodities, and adjudged not by the common judges of property but wretches hired by those to whom Excise is paid.' The Commissioners of Excise being offended by this severe reflection, consulted Mr. Murray, then Attorney-General, to know whether redress could be legally obtained. I wished to have procured for my readers a copy of the opinion which he gave, and which may now be justly considered as history: but the mysterious secrecy of office it seems would not permit it. I am, however, informed, by very good authority, that its import was, that the passage might be considered as actionable; but that it would be more prudent in the board not to prosecute. Johnson never made the smallest alteration in this passage. We find he still retained his early prejudice against Excise; for in the *Idler*, No. 65, there is the following very extraordinary paragraph: 'The authenticity of *Clarendon's* history, though printed with the sanction of one of the first Universities of the world, had not an unexpected manuscript been happily discovered, would, with the help of factious credulity, have been brought into question, by the two lowest of all human beings, a Scribbler for a party, and a Commissioner of Excise.' The persons to whom he alludes were Mr. John Oldmixon, and George Duckett, Esq.

and temporary poems; whence any mean production is called *Grub Street*.—‘*Lexicographer*, a writer of dictionaries, a *harmless drudge*.’

At the time when he was concluding his very eloquent Preface, Johnson’s mind appears to have been in such a state of depression, that we cannot contemplate without wonder the vigorous and splendid thoughts which so highly distinguish that performance. ‘I (says he) may surely be contented without the praise of perfection, which if I could obtain in this gloom of solitude, what would it avail me? I have protracted my work till most of those whom I wished to please have sunk into the grave; and success and miscarriage are empty sounds. I therefore dismiss it with frigid tranquillity, having little to fear or hope from censure or from praise.’ That this indifference was rather a temporary than an habitual feeling, appears, I think, from his letters to Mr. Warton; and however he may have been affected for the moment, certain it is that the honours which his great work procured him, both at home and abroad, were very grateful to him. His friend, the Earl of Cork and Orrery, being at Florence, presented it to the *Accademia della Crusca*. That Academy sent Johnson their *Vocabulario*, and the French Academy sent him their *Dictionnaire*, which Mr. Langton had the pleasure to convey to him.

It must undoubtedly seem strange that the conclusion of his Preface should be expressed in terms so desponding, when it is considered that the author was then only in his forty-sixth year. But we must ascribe its gloom to that miserable dejection of spirits to which he was constitutionally subject, and which

was aggravated by the death of his wife two years before. I have heard it ingeniously observed by a lady of rank and elegance, that ‘his melancholy was then at its meridian.’ It pleased God to grant him almost thirty years of life after this time; and once when he was in a placid frame of mind, he was obliged to own to me that he had enjoyed happier days, and had many more friends, since that gloomy hour, than before.

It is a sad saying that ‘most of those whom he wished to please had sunk into the grave’; and his case at forty-five was singularly unhappy, unless the circle of his friends was very narrow. I have often thought, that as longevity is generally desired, and I believe, generally expected, it would be wise to be continually adding to the number of our friends, that the loss of some may be supplied by others. Friendship, ‘the wine of life,’ should, like a well-stocked cellar, be thus continually renewed; and it is consolatory to think that although we can seldom add what will equal the generous *first-growths* of our youth, yet friendship becomes insensibly old in much less time than is commonly imagined, and not many years are required to make it very mellow and pleasant. *Warmth* will, no doubt, make a considerable difference. Men of affectionate temper and bright fancy will coalesce a great deal sooner than those who are cold and dull.

The proposition which I have now endeavoured to illustrate, was at a subsequent period of his life, the opinion of Johnson himself. He said to Sir Joshua Reynolds, ‘If a man does not make new acquaintance as he advances through life, he will soon find himself

left alone. A man, sir, should keep his friendship *in constant repair.*'

The celebrated Mr. Wilkes, whose notions and habits of life were very opposite to his, but who was ever eminent for literature and vivacity, sallied forth with a little *jeu d'esprit* upon the following passage in his Grammar of the English Tongue, prefixed to the *Dictionary*: '*It seldom, perhaps never, begins any but the first syllable.*' In an essay printed in the *Public Advertiser*, this lively writer enumerated many instances in opposition to this remark; for example, 'The author of this observation must be a man of quick *apprehension*, and of a most *comprehensive* genius.' The position is undoubtedly expressed with too much latitude.

This light sally, we may suppose, made no great impression on our Lexicographer; for we find that he did not alter the passage till many years afterwards.<sup>1</sup>

He had the pleasure of being treated in a very different manner by his old pupil Mr. Garrick, in the following complimentary Epigram:

*On Johnson's Dictionary*

'Talk of war with a Briton, he'll boldly advance,  
That one English soldier will beat ten of France;  
Would we alter the boast from the sword to the pen,  
Our odds are still greater, still greater our men:  
In the deep mines of science though Frenchmen may toil,  
Can their strength be compared to Locke, Newton, and Boyle?  
Let them rally their heroes, send forth all their powers,  
Their verse-men and prose-men, then match them with ours!

<sup>1</sup> In the third edition, published in 1773, he left out the words *perhaps never*, and added the following paragraph:

<sup>2</sup> It sometimes begins middle or final syllables in words compounded, as *block-head*, or derived from the Latin as *comprehensive*.



First Shakespeare and Milton, like gods in the fight,  
 Have put their whole drama and epic to flight;  
 In satires, epistles, and odes, would they cope,  
 Their numbers retreat before Dryden and Pope;  
 And Johnson, well arm'd like a hero of yore,  
 Has beat forty French,<sup>1</sup> and will beat forty more!

Johnson this year gave at once a proof of his benevolence, quickness of apprehension, and admirable art of composition, in the assistance which he gave to Mr. Zachariah Williams, father of the blind lady whom he had humanely received under his roof. Mr. Williams had followed the profession of physic in Wales; but having a very strong propensity to the study of natural philosophy, had made many ingenious advances towards a discovery of the longitude, and repaired to London in hopes of obtaining the great parliamentary reward. He failed of success; but Johnson having made himself master of his principles and experiments, wrote for him a pamphlet, published in quarto, with the following title: *An Account of an Attempt to ascertain the Longitude at Sea by an exact Theory of the Variation of the Magnetical Needle; with a Table of the Variations at the most remarkable Cities in Europe, from the year 1660 to 1860.* To diffuse it more extensively, it was accompanied with an Italian translation on the opposite page, which it is supposed was the work of Signor Baretti,<sup>2</sup> an Italian of considerable literature, who having come to England a few years

<sup>1</sup> The number of the French Academy employed in settling their language.

<sup>2</sup> [This ingenious foreigner, who was a native of Piedmont, came to England about the year 1753, and died in London, May 5, 1789. A very candid and judicious account of him and his works, beginning with the words 'So much asperity,' and written, it is believed, by a distinguished dignitary in the Church, may be found in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for that year, p. 469.—M.]

before, had been employed both in the capacity of a language-master and an author, and formed an intimacy with Dr. Johnson. This pamphlet Johnson presented to the Bodleian Library.<sup>1</sup> On a blank leaf of it is pasted a paragraph cut out of a newspaper, containing an account of the death and character of Williams, plainly written by Johnson.<sup>2</sup>

In July this year he had formed some scheme of mental improvement, the particular purpose of which does not appear. But we find in his *Prayers and Meditations*, p. 25, a prayer entitled 'On the Study of Philosophy, as an instrument of living'; and after it follows a note, 'This study was not pursued.'

On the 13th of the same month he wrote in his Journal the following scheme of life for Sunday: 'Having lived (as he with tenderness of conscience expresses himself) not without an habitual reverence for the Sabbath, yet without that attention to its religious duties which Christianity requires:

'1. To rise early, and in order to it, to go to sleep early on Saturday.

'2. To use some extraordinary devotion in the morning.

'3. To examine the tenor of my life, and particularly the last week; and to mark my advances in religion, or recession from it.

'4. To read the Scripture methodically with such helps as are at hand.

<sup>1</sup> See note by Mr. Warton, p. 223 [from which it appears that '12th' in the next note means the 12th of July 1755.—M.].

<sup>2</sup> 'On Saturday the 12th, about twelve at night, died Mr. Zachariah Williams, in his eighty-third year, after an illness of eight months, in full possession of his mental faculties. He has been long known to philosophers and seamen for his skill in magnetism, and his proposal to ascertain the longitude by a peculiar system of the variation of the compass. He was a man of industry indefatigable, of conversation inoffensive, patient of adversity and disease, eminently sober, temperate, and pious; and worthy to have ended life with better fortune.'

'5. To go to church twice.

'6. To read books of Divinity, either speculative or practical.

'7. To instruct my family.

'8. To wear off by meditation any worldly soil contracted in the week.'

In 1756 Johnson found that the great fame of his *Dictionary* had not set him above the necessity of 'making provision for the day that was passing over him.'<sup>1</sup> No royal or noble patron extended a munificent hand to give independence to the man who had conferred stability on the language of his country. We may feel indignant that there should have been such unworthy neglect; but we must, at the same time, congratulate ourselves, when we consider that to this very neglect operating to rouse the natural indolence of his constitution we owe many valuable productions, which otherwise perhaps might never have appeared.

He had spent, during the progress of the work, the money for which he had contracted to write his *Dictionary*. We have seen that the reward of his labour was only fifteen hundred and seventy-five pounds; and when the expense of amanuenses and paper, and other articles, are deducted, his clear profit was very inconsiderable. I once said to him, 'I am sorry, sir, you did not get more for your *Dictionary*.' His answer was, 'I am sorry too. But it was very well. The booksellers are generous, liberal-minded

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<sup>1</sup> [He was so far from being 'set above the necessity of making provision for the day that was passing over him,' that he appears to have been in this year in great pecuniary distress, having been arrested for debt; on which occasion his friend Samuel Richardson became his surety. See a letter from Johnson to him on that subject, dated Feb. 19, 1756.—Richardson's *Correspondence*, vol. v. p. 283.—M.]

men.' He upon all occasions did ample justice to their character in this respect. He considered them as the patrons of literature; and, indeed, although they have eventually been considerable gainers by his *Dictionary*, it is to them that we owe its having been undertaken and carried through at the risk of great expense, for they were not absolutely sure of being indemnified.

On the first day of this year<sup>1</sup> we find from his private devotions, that he had then recovered from sickness,<sup>2</sup> and in February that his eye was restored to its use.<sup>3</sup> The pious gratitude with which he acknowledges mercies upon every occasion is very edifying; as is the humble submission which he breathes, when it is the will of his heavenly Father to try him with afflictions. As such dispositions become the state of man here, and are the true effects of religious discipline, we cannot but venerate in Johnson one of the most exercised minds that our holy religion hath ever formed. If there be any thoughtless enough to suppose such exercise the weakness of a great understanding, let them look up to Johnson, and be convinced that what he so earnestly practised must have a rational foundation.

His works this year were an abstract or epitome, in octavo, of his folio *Dictionary*, and a few essays in a

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<sup>1</sup> [In April in this year Johnson wrote a letter to Dr. Joseph Warton in consequence of having read a few pages of that gentleman's newly published *Essay on the Genius and Writings of Pope*. The only paragraph in it that respects Johnson's personal history is this: 'For my part I have not lately done much. I have been ill in the winter, and my eye has been inflamed; but I please myself with the hopes of doing many things with which I have long pleased and deceived myself!'—*Memoirs of Dr. J. Warton*, etc., 4to, 1806.—M.]

<sup>2</sup> *Prayers and Meditations*.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

monthly publication entitled *The Universal Visiter*. Christopher Smart, with whose unhappy vacillation of mind he sincerely sympathised, was one of the stated undertakers of this miscellany; and it was to assist him that Johnson sometimes employed his pen. All the essays marked with two *asterisks* have been ascribed to him; but I am confident, from internal evidence, that of these, neither 'The Life of Chaucer,' 'Reflections on the State of Portugal,' nor an 'Essay on Architecture,' were written by him. I am equally confident, upon the same evidence, that he wrote 'Farther Thoughts on Agriculture'; being the sequel of a very inferior essay on the same subject, and which, though carried on as if by the same hand, is both in thinking and expression so far above it, and so strikingly peculiar, as to leave no doubt of its true parent; and that he also wrote 'A Dissertation on the State of Literature and Authors,' and 'A Dissertation on the Epitaphs written by Pope.' The last of these, indeed, he afterwards added to his *Idler*. Why the essays truly written by him are marked in the same manner with some which he did not write, I cannot explain; but with deference to those who have ascribed to him the three essays which I have rejected, they want all the characteristical marks of Johnsonian composition.

He engaged also to superintend and contribute largely to another monthly publication, entitled *The Literary Magazine, or Universal Review*'; the first number of which came out in May this year. What were his emoluments from this undertaking, and what other writers were employed in it, I have not discovered. He continued to write in it, with intermis-

sions, till the fifteenth number; and I think that he never gave better proofs of the force, acuteness, and vivacity of his mind, than in this miscellany, whether we consider his original essays, or his reviews of the works of others. The 'Preliminary Address' to the public is a proof how this great man could embellish, with the graces of superior composition, even so trite a thing as the plan of a magazine.

His original essays are, 'An Introduction to the Political State of Great Britain'; 'Remarks on the Militia Bill'; 'Observations on his Britannic Majesty's Treaties with the Empress of Russia and the Landgrave of Hesse Cassel'; 'Observations on the Present State of Affairs'; and 'Memoirs of Frederick III. King of Prussia.' In all these he displays extensive political knowledge and sagacity, expressed with uncommon energy and perspicuity, without any of those words which he sometimes took a pleasure in adopting, in imitation of Sir Thomas Browne; of whose *Christian Morals* he this year gave an edition, with his Life prefixed to it, which is one of Johnson's best biographical performances. In one instance only in these essays has he indulged his *Brownism*. Dr. Robertson, the historian, mentioned it to me, as having at once convinced him that Johnson was the author of the 'Memoirs of the King of Prussia.' Speaking of the pride which the old king, the father of his hero, took in being master of the tallest regiment in Europe, he says, 'To review this *towering* regiment was his daily pleasure; and to perpetuate it was so much his care, that when he met a tall woman he immediately commanded one of his *Titanian* retinue to marry her, that they might *propagate procerity*.' For this Anglo-

Latin word *procerity*, Johnson had, however, the authority of Addison.

His reviews are of the following books: Birch's *History of the Royal Society*; Murphy's *Gray's-Inn Journal*; Warton's *Essay on the Writings and Genius of Pope*, vol. i.; Hampton's *Translation of Polybius*; Blackwell's *Memoirs of the Court of Augustus*; Russel's *Natural History of Aleppo*; Sir Isaac Newton's *Arguments in Proof of a Deity*; Borlase's *History of the Isles of Sicily*; Holme's *Experiments on Bleaching*; Browne's *Christian Morals*; Hales *On distilling Sea-Water, Ventilators in Ships, and curing an ill Taste in Milk*; Lucas's *Essay on Waters*; Keith's *Catalogue of the Scottish Bishops*; Browne's *History of Jamaica*; *Philosophical Transactions*, vol. xlix.; Mrs. Lenox's *Translation of Sully's Memoirs*; *Miscellanies by Elizabeth Harrison*; Evans's *Map and Account of the Middle Colonies in America*; *Letter on the Case of Admiral Byng*; *Appeal to the People concerning Admiral Byng*; Hanway's *Eight Days' Journey, and Essay on Tea*; *The Cadet, a Military Treatise*; *Some farther Particulars in relation to the Case of Admiral Byng, by a gentleman of Oxford*; *The Conduct of the Ministry relating to the present War impartially examined*; *A Free Inquiry into the Nature and Origin of Evil*. All these, from internal evidence, were written by Johnson: some of them I know he avowed, and have marked them with an *asterisk* accordingly.<sup>1</sup> Mr. Thomas Davies, indeed, ascribed to him the review of Mr. Burke's *Inquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*; and Sir John

<sup>1</sup> [I have omitted the asterisk as puzzling. All Johnson's avowed writings are included in the collected editions of his works.—A. E.]

Hawkins, with equal discernment, has inserted it in his collection of Johnson's works: whereas it has no resemblance to Johnson's composition, and is well known to have been written by Mr. Murphy, who has acknowledged it to me and many others.

It is worthy of remark, in justice to Johnson's political character, which has been misrepresented as abjectly submissive to power, that his *Observations on the present State of Affairs*, glow with as animated a spirit of constitutional liberty as can be found anywhere. Thus he begins :

'The time is now come, in which every Englishman expects to be informed of the national affairs; and in which he has a right to have that expectation gratified. For, whatever may be urged by ministers, or those whom vanity or interest make the followers of ministers, concerning the necessity of confidence in our governors, and the presumption of prying with profane eyes into the recesses of policy, it is evident that this reverence can be claimed only by counsels yet unexecuted, and projects suspended in deliberation. But when a design has ended in miscarriage or success, when every eye and every ear is witness to general discontent, or general satisfaction, it is then a proper time to disentangle confusion and illustrate obscurity; to show by what causes every event was produced, and in what effects it is likely to terminate; to lay down with distinct particularity what rumour always huddles in general exclamation, or perplexes by indigested narratives; to show whence happiness or calamity is derived, and whence it may be expected; and honestly to lay before the people what inquiry can gather of the past, and conjecture can estimate of the future.'

Here we have it assumed as an incontrovertible principle, that in this country the people are the superintendents of the conduct and measures of those by whom government is administered; of the beneficial



effect of which the present reign afforded an illustrious example, when addresses from all parts of the kingdom controlled an audacious attempt to introduce a new power subversive of the crown.

A still stronger proof of his patriotic spirit appears in his review of an *Essay on Waters*, by Dr. Lucas, of whom, after describing him as a man well known to the world for his daring defiance of power, when he thought it exerted on the side of wrong, he thus speaks :

‘The Irish ministers drove him from his native country by a proclamation, in which they charge him with crimes of which they never intended to be called to the proof, and oppressed him by methods equally irresistible by guilt and innocence.

‘Let the man thus driven into exile, for having been the friend of his country, be received in every other place as a confessor of liberty ; and let the tools of power be taught in time, that they may rob, but cannot impoverish.’

Some of his reviews in this Magazine are very short accounts of the pieces noticed, and I mention them only that Dr. Johnson’s opinion of the works may be known ; but many of them are examples of elaborate criticism, in the most masterly style. In his review of the *Memoirs of the Court of Augustus*, he has the resolution to think and speak from his own mind, regardless of the cant transmitted from age to age, in praise of the ancient Romans. Thus : ‘I know not why any one but a schoolboy in his declamation should whine over the Commonwealth of Rome, which grew great only by the misery of the rest of mankind. The Romans, like others, as soon as they grew rich, grew corrupt ; and in their corruption sold the lives and freedoms of themselves, and of one another.’ Again : ‘A people, who while they were poor robbed man-

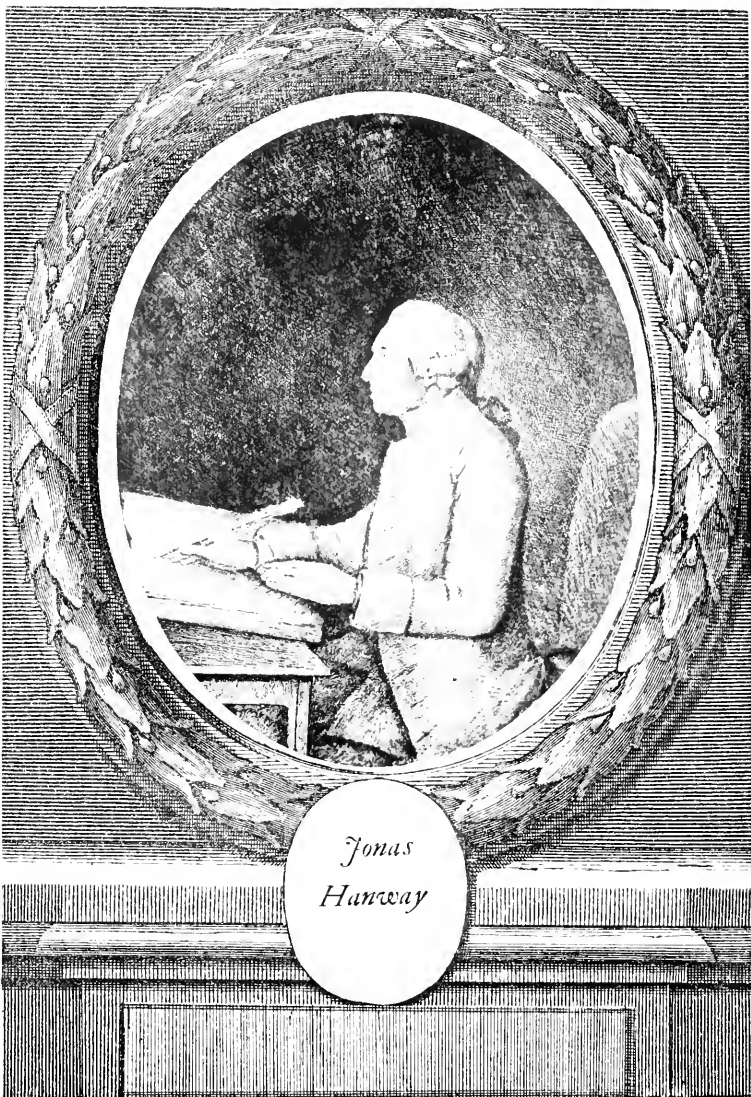
kind; and as soon as they became rich, robbed one another.' In his review of the *Miscellanies* in prose and verse, published by Elizabeth Harrison, but written by many hands, he gives an eminent proof at once of his orthodoxy and candour:

'The authors of the essays in prose seem generally to have imitated, or tried to imitate, the copiousness and luxuriance of Mrs. Rowe. This, however, is not all their praise; they have laboured to add to her brightness of imagery, her purity of sentiments. The poets have had Dr. Watts before their eyes; a writer, who, if he stood not in the first class of genius, compensated that defect by a ready application of his powers to the promotion of piety. The attempt to employ the ornaments of romance in the decoration of religion, was, I think, first made by Mr. Boyle's *Martyrdom of Theodora*; but Boyle's philosophical studies did not allow him time for the cultivation of style: and the completion of the great design was reserved for Mrs. Rowe. Dr. Watts was one of the first who taught the Dissenters to write and speak like other men, by showing them that elegance might consist with piety. They would have both done honour to a better society, for they had that charity which might well make their failings be forgotten, and with which the whole Christian world wish for communion. They were pure from all the heresies of an age, to which every opinion is become a favourite that the universal church has hitherto detested!

'This praise the general interest of mankind requires to be given to writers who please and do not corrupt, who instruct and do not weary. But to them all human eulogies are vain, whom I believe applauded by angels, and numbered with the just.'

His defence of tea against Mr. Jonas Hanway's violent attack upon that elegant and popular beverage, shows how very well a man of genius can write upon the slightest subject, when he writes as the Italians say, *con amore*: I suppose no person ever enjoyed with more relish the infusion of that fragrant leaf





than Johnson. The quantities which he drank of it at all hours were so great, that his nerves must have been uncommonly strong not to have been extremely relaxed by such an intemperate use of it. He assured me, that he never felt the least inconvenience from it; which is a proof that the fault of his constitution was rather a too great tension of fibres, than the contrary. Mr. Hanway wrote an angry answer to Johnson's review of his essay on Tea, and Johnson, after a full and deliberate pause, made a reply to it; the only instance, I believe, in the whole course of his life, when he condescended to oppose anything that was written against him. I suppose when he thought of any of his little antagonists, he was ever justly aware of the high sentiment of Ajax in Ovid :

'Iste tulit pretium jam nunc certaminis hujus,  
Qui, cum victus erit, mecum certasse feretur.'

*Met.* xiii. 19.

But, indeed, the good Mr. Hanway laid himself so open to ridicule, that Johnson's animadversions upon his attack were chiefly to make sport.

The generosity with which he pleads the cause of Admiral Byng is highly to the honour of his heart and spirit. Though Voltaire affects to be witty upon the fate of that unfortunate officer, observing that he was shot '*pour encourager les autres*,' the nation has long been satisfied that his life was sacrificed to the political fervour of the times. In the vault belonging to the Torrington family, in the church of Southill, in Bedfordshire, there is the following epitaph upon his monument, which I have transcribed :

‘TO THE PERPETUAL DISGRACE  
OF PUBLIC JUSTICE,  
THE HONOURABLE JOHN BYNG, ESQ.,  
ADMIRAL OF THE BLUE,  
FELL A MARTYR TO POLITICAL  
PERSECUTION,  
MARCH 14, IN THE YEAR 1757;  
WHEN BRAVERY AND LOYALTY  
WERE INSUFFICIENT SECURITIES  
FOR THE LIFE AND HONOUR OF  
A NAVAL OFFICER.’

Johnson’s most exquisite critical essay in the *Literary Magazine*, and indeed anywhere, is his review of Soame Jenyns’s *Inquiry into the Origin of Evil*.<sup>1</sup> Jenyns was possessed of lively talents, and a style eminently pure and easy, and could very happily play with a light subject, either in prose or verse; but when he speculated on that most difficult and excruciating question, the Origin of Evil, he ‘ventured far beyond his depth,’ and, accordingly, was exposed by Johnson, both with acute argument and brilliant wit. I remember when the late Mr. Bicknell’s humorous performance, entitled ‘The Musical Travels of Joel Collyer,’ in which a slight attempt is made to ridicule Johnson, was ascribed to Soame Jenyns, ‘Ha! (said Johnson) I thought I had given *him* enough of it.’

His triumph over Jenyns is thus described by my friend Mr. Courtenay in his *Poetical Review of the literary and moral Character of Dr. Johnson*; a performance of such merit, that had I not been honoured with a very kind and partial notice in it, I should echo

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<sup>1</sup> [Every reader should make it in his business to turn to this Review, which will be found in all collected editions of Johnson. It is a masterpiece of wit, and most characteristic.—A. B.]

the sentiments of men of the first taste loudly in its praise :

‘When specious sophists with presumption scan  
The source of evil hidden still from man ;  
Revive Arabian tales, and vainly hope  
To rival St. John, and his scholar Pope :  
Though metaphysics spread the gloom of night,  
By reason’s star he guides our aching sight ;  
The bounds of knowledge masks, and points the way  
To pathless wastes, where wilder’d sages stray :  
Where, like a farthing link-boy, Jenyns stands,  
And the dim torch drops from his feeble hands.’<sup>1</sup>

This year Mr. William Payne, brother of the respectable bookseller of that name, published *An Introduction to the Game of Draughts*, to which Johnson

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<sup>1</sup> Some time after Dr. Johnson’s death there appeared in the newspapers and magazines an illiberal and petulant attack upon him, in the form of an Epitaph, under the name of Mr. Soame Jenyns, very unworthy of that gentleman, who had quietly submitted to the critical lash while Johnson lived. It assumed, as characteristics of him, all the vulgar circumstances of abuse which had circulated amongst the ignorant. It was an unbecoming indulgence of puny resentment, at a time when he himself was at a very advanced age, and had a near prospect of descending to the grave. I was truly sorry for it ; for he was then become an avowed, and (as my Lord Bishop of London, who had a serious conversation with him on the subject, assures me) a sincere Christian. He could not expect that Johnson’s numerous friends would patiently bear to have the memory of their master stigmatised by no mean pen, but that, at least, one would be found to retort. Accordingly, this unjust and sarcastic Epitaph was met in the same public field by an answer, in terms by no means soft, and such as wanton provocation only could justify :

#### EPITAPH.

*Prepared for a creature not quite dead yet.*

‘ Here lies a little ugly nauseous elf,  
Who judging only from its wretched self,  
Feebly attempted, petulant and vain,  
The ‘Origin of Evil’ to explain.  
A mighty Genius at this elf displeased,  
With a strong critic grasp the urchin squeezed.  
For thirty years its coward spleen it kept,  
Till in the dust the mighty Genius slept ;  
Then stunk and fretted in expiring snuff,  
And blink’d at Johnson with its last poor puff.’

contributed a Dedication to the Earl of Rochford, and a Preface, both of which are admirably adapted to the treatise to which they are prefixed. Johnson, I believe, did not play at draughts after leaving College, by which he suffered; for it would have afforded him an innocent soothing relief from the melancholy which distressed him so often. I have heard him regret that he had not learnt to play at cards; and the game of draughts we know is peculiarly calculated to fix the attention without straining it. There is a composure and gravity in draughts which insensibly tranquillises the mind; and, accordingly, the Dutch are fond of it, as they are of smoking, of the sedative influence of which, though he himself never smoked, he had a high opinion.<sup>1</sup> Besides, there is in draughts some exercise of the faculties; and accordingly, Johnson, wishing to dignify the subject in his Dedication with what is most estimable in it, observes: 'Triflers may find or make anything a trifle: but since it is the great characteristic of a wise man to see events in their causes, to obviate consequences, and ascertain contingencies, your Lordship will think nothing a trifle by which the mind is inured to caution, foresight, and circumspection.'

As one of the little occasional advantages which he did not disdain to take by his pen, as a man whose profession was literature, he this year accepted of a guinea from Mr. Robert Dodsley, for writing the introduction to the *London Chronicle*, an evening newspaper; and even in so slight a performance exhibited peculiar talents. This *Chronicle* still subsists, and

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<sup>1</sup> *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides*, 3rd edit., p. 48.



from what I observed, when I was abroad, has a more extensive circulation upon the Continent than any of the English newspapers. It was constantly read by Johnson himself; and it is but just to observe, that it has all along been distinguished for good sense, accuracy, moderation, and delicacy.

Another instance of the same nature has been communicated to me by the Reverend Dr. Thomas Campbell, who has done himself considerable credit by his own writings. 'Sitting with Dr. Johnson one morning alone, he asked me if I had known Dr. Madden, who was the author of the premium-scheme<sup>1</sup> in Ireland. On my answering in the affirmative, and also that I had for some years lived in his neighbourhood, etc., he begged of me that when I returned to Ireland I would endeavour to procure for him a poem of Dr. Madden's, called *Boulter's Monument*.<sup>2</sup> The reason (said he) why I wish for it, is this: when Dr. Madden came to London he submitted that work to my castigation; and I remember I blotted a great many lines, and might have blotted many more without making the

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<sup>1</sup> [In the College of Dublin four quarterly examinations of the students are held in each year, in various prescribed branches of literature and science; and premiums, consisting of books impressed with the College Arms, are adjudged by examiners to those who have most distinguished themselves in the several classes, after a very rigid trial, which lasts two days. This regulation, which has subsisted about seventy years, has been attended with the most beneficial effects.

Dr. Samuel Madden was the first proposer of premiums in that University. They were instituted about the year 1734. He was also one of the founders of the Dublin Society for the encouragement of arts and agriculture. In addition to the premiums which were and are still annually given by that society for this purpose, Dr. Madden gave others from his own fund. Hence he was usually called 'Premium Madden.'—M.]

<sup>2</sup> [Dr. Hugh Boulter, Archbishop of Armagh, and Primate of Ireland. He died Sept. 27, 1742, at which time he was, for the thirteenth time, one of the Lords Justices of that kingdom. Johnson speaks of him in high terms of commendation in his *Life of Ambrose Philips*.—J. BOSWELL, Junior.]

poem worse.<sup>1</sup> However, the Doctor was very thankful and very generous, for he gave me ten guineas, *which was to me at that time a great sum.*'

He this year resumed his scheme of giving an edition of Shakespeare with notes. He issued Proposals of considerable length,<sup>2</sup> in which he showed that he perfectly well knew what a variety of research such an undertaking required ; but his indolence prevented him from pursuing it with that diligence which alone can collect those scattered facts, that genius, however acute, penetrating and luminous, cannot discover by its own force. It is remarkable, that at this time his fancied activity was for the moment so vigorous, that he promised his work should be published before Christmas 1757. Yet nine years elapsed before it saw the light. His throes in bringing it forth had been severe and remittent ; and at last we may almost conclude that the Cæsarean operation was performed by the knife of Churchill, whose upbraiding satire, I dare say, made Johnson's friends urge him to despatch.

'He for subscribers baits his hook,  
And takes your cash ; but where's the book ?  
No matter where ; wise fear, you know,  
Forbids the robbing of a foe ;  
But what, to serve our private ends,  
Forbids the cheating of our friends ?'

About this period he was offered a living of considerable value in Lincolnshire, if he were inclined to enter into holy orders. It was a rectory in the gift of Mr. Langton, the father of his much-valued friend.

<sup>1</sup> [Dr. Madden wrote very bad verses. *Vide* those prefixed to Leland's *Life of Philip of Macedon*, 4to, 1758.—KEARNEY.]

<sup>2</sup> They have been reprinted by Mr. Malone in the Preface to his edition of Shakespeare.

But he did not accept of it; partly I believe from a conscientious motive, being persuaded that his temper and habits rendered him unfit for that assiduous and familiar instruction of the vulgar and ignorant, which he held to be an essential duty in a clergyman; and partly because his love of a London life was so strong, that he would have thought himself an exile in any other place, particularly if residing in the country. Whoever would wish to see his thoughts upon that subject displayed in their full force, may peruse the *Adventurer*, Number 126.

In 1757 it does not appear that he published anything, except some of those articles in the *Literary Magazine*, which have been mentioned. That Magazine, after Johnson ceased to write in it, gradually declined, though the popular epithet of *Antigallican* was added to it; and in July 1758 it expired. He probably prepared a part of his Shakespeare this year, and he dictated a speech on the subject of an address to the Throne, after the expedition to Rochfort, which was delivered by one of his friends, I know not in what public meeting. It is printed in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for October 1785 as his, and bears sufficient marks of authenticity.

By the favour of Mr. Joseph Cooper Walker of the Treasury, Dublin, I have obtained a copy of the following letter from Johnson to the venerable author of *Dissertations on the History of Ireland* :

TO CHARLES O'CONNOR, ESQ.<sup>1</sup>

'SIR,—I have lately, by the favour of Mr. Faulkner, seen your account of Ireland, and cannot forbear to solicit a pro-

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<sup>1</sup> [Of this gentleman, who died at his seat at Ballinegare, in the county of Roscommon in Ireland, July 1, 1791, in his eighty-second

secution of your design. Sir William Temple complains that Ireland is less known than any other country, as to its ancient state. The natives have had little leisure, and little encouragement, for inquiry; and strangers, not knowing the language, have had no ability.

'I have long wished that the Irish literature were cultivated.<sup>1</sup> Ireland is known by tradition to have been once the seat of piety and learning: and surely it would be very acceptable to all those who are curious either in the original of nations, or the affinities of languages, to be further informed of the revolution of a people so ancient, and once so illustrious.

'What relation there is between the Welsh and Irish language, or between the language of Ireland and that of Biscay, deserves inquiry. Of these provincial and unextended tongues it seldom happens that more than one are understood by any one man; and, therefore, it seldom happens that a fair comparison can be made. I hope you will continue to cultivate this kind of learning, which has too long lain neglected, and which, if it be suffered to remain in oblivion for another century, may, perhaps, never be retrieved. As I wish well to all useful undertakings, I would not forbear to let you know how much you deserve in my opinion from all the lovers of study, and how much pleasure your work has given to, sir, your most obliged, and most humble servant,

'SAM JOHNSON.

'*London, April 9, 1757.*'

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year, some account may be found in the *Gentleman's Magazine* of that date.—M.]

<sup>1</sup> The celebrated orator, Mr. Flood, has shown himself to be of Dr. Johnson's opinion, having by his will bequeathed his estate, after the death of his wife, Lady Frances, to the University of Dublin; 'desiring that immediately after the said estate shall come into their possession they shall appoint two professors, one for the study of the native Erse or Irish language, and the other for the study of Irish antiquities and Irish history, and for the study of any other European language illustrative of, or auxiliary to, the study of Irish antiquities or Irish history; and that they shall give yearly two liberal premiums for two compositions, one in verse, and the other in prose, in the Irish language.'

[Since the above was written, Mr. Flood's will has been set aside, after a trial at bar, in the Court of Exchequer in Ireland.—M.]

TO THE REV. MR. THOMAS WARTON

'DEAR SIR,—Dr. Marsili of Padua, a learned gentleman, and good Latin poet, has a mind to see Oxford. I have given him a letter to Dr. Huddesford,<sup>1</sup> and shall be glad if you will introduce him, and show him anything in Oxford.

'I am printing my new edition of Shakespeare.

'I long to see you all, but cannot conveniently come yet. You might write to me now and then if you were good for anything. But *honores mutant mores*.<sup>2</sup> Professors forget their friends. I shall certainly complain to Miss Jones.<sup>3</sup>—I am, yours, etc.,

SAM JOHNSON.

'[London,] June 21, 1757.

'Please to make my compliments to Mr. Wise.

Mr. Burney having enclosed to him an extract from the review of his *Dictionary* in the *Bibliothèque des Savans*,<sup>4</sup> and a list of subscribers to his Shakespeare, which Mr. Burney had procured in Norfolk, he wrote the following answer :

TO MR. BURNEY, IN LYNNE, NORFOLK

'SIR,—That I may show myself sensible of your favours, and not commit the same fault a second time, I make haste to answer the letter which I received this morning. The truth is, the other likewise was received, and I wrote an answer ; but being desirous to transmit you some proposals and

<sup>1</sup> 'Now, or late, Vice-Chancellor.'

<sup>2</sup> 'Mr. Warton was elected Professor of Poetry at Oxford in the preceding year.'

<sup>3</sup> 'Miss Jones lives at Oxford, and was often of our parties. She was a very ingenious poetess, and published a volume of poems : and, on the whole, was a most sensible, agreeable, and amiable woman. She was sister to the Reverend River Jones, Chanter of Christ Church Cathedral at Oxford, and Johnson used to call her the *Chantress*. I have heard him often address her in this passage from *Il Penseroso* :

"Thee, Chantress, oft the woods among  
I woo," etc.

She died unmarried.'

<sup>4</sup> Tom. iii. p. 482.

receipts, I waited till I could find a convenient conveyance, and day was passed after day, till other things drove it from my thoughts; yet not so, but that I remember with great pleasure your commendation of my *Dictionary*. Your praise was welcome, not only because I believe it was sincere, but because praise has been very scarce. A man of your candour will be surprised when I tell you that among all my acquaintance there were only two, who upon the publication of my book did not endeavour to depress me with threats of censure from the public, or with objections learned from those who had learned them from my own preface. Yours is the only letter of good-will that I have received; though, indeed, I am promised something of that sort from Sweden.

‘How my new edition<sup>1</sup> will be received I know not; the subscription has not been very successful. I shall publish about March.

‘If you can direct me how to send proposals, I should wish that they were in such hands.

‘I remember, sir, in some of the first letters with which you favoured me, you mentioned your lady. May I inquire after her? In return for the favours which you have shown me, it is not much to tell you that I wish you and her all that can conduce to your happiness.—I am, sir, your most obliged, and most humble servant,

SAM JOHNSON.

‘*Gough Square, Dec. 24, 1757.*’

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<sup>1</sup> Of Shakespeare.

END OF VOL. I

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